THE MODERN CRISIS IN RELIGION

GEORGE C. LORIMER

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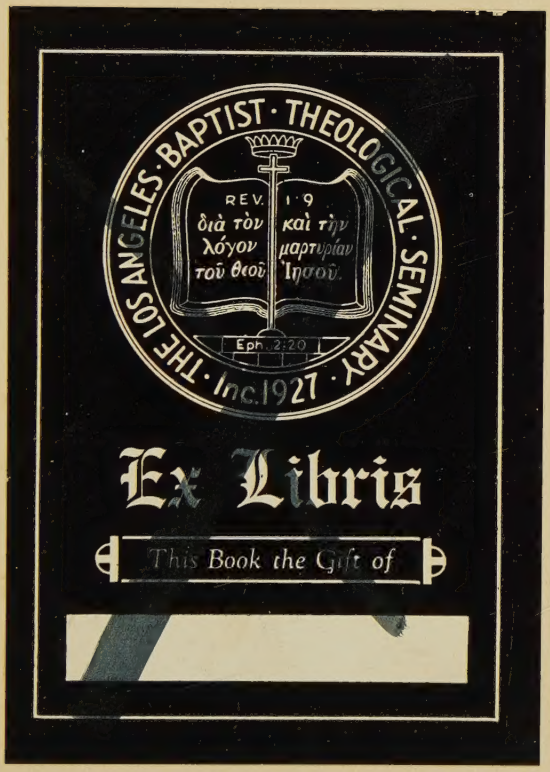
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THE MODERN CRISIS IN RELIGION

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THE MODERN CRISIS IN RELIGION

By
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Dedicated to
Madison Avenue Baptist Church
and Congregation
of the
City of New York
with the hope that they may have some
worthy part in solving
The Religious Problems
of the
Twentieth Century

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By Way of Introduction

WHEN invited by the publishers to furnish a volume for the International Pulpit it was with me a question whether to select twenty or thirty sermons embracing as many diverse topics, or to choose a number closely related to each other and dealing with one great theme of present interest. For reasons that need not be stated here I decided on the latter course.

Much has been written of late on the signs of religious decadence. On both sides of the Atlantic fears have been expressed that Christianity has lost for good and all its hold on mankind; and satisfaction, in some quarters, has not been disguised that its final collapse is evidently so near at hand.

What the grounds are for these dreary apprehensions and for this singular congratulation are not altogether clear to the mass of the people. All that they really know is that vague statements are current alleging a decline of faith, accompanied by depressing statistical representations and by accounts of failures and disasters. Their information is detached, fragmentary and disconnected, and consequently their inferences are not always safe or legitimate.

That there is a crisis in religion, whether the result of premature and unwarranted alarm, or the effect of recent and reliable investigation, must in all candor be conceded. We may ridicule the thought and we may, if we please,

dismiss it with an idle laugh. But the subject is one that cannot wisely be ignored, and which must sooner or later be discussed. It will not down. The issues involved are too grave and touch too closely the innermost sanctities of thought and feeling for them to be trifled with. What is this shadow that has fallen on the religious life of the day? Why these misgivings as to the future of our faith? Are the rumblings heard on every side tokens of an approaching hour of doom, or only signs of a coming spiritual and moral earthquake which shall bring to an end the many artificial, superficial, and superstitious things which have been built, to the amazement of angels and the detriment of men, on Christian foundations?

I have brought together several discourses which may at least indicate the direction in which we may seek for answers to these questionings. In some other respects they may prove serviceable both to preacher and to layman; and, as the latter is as deeply concerned in the outcome of the discussion as the former, I have preserved throughout the popular form of pulpit address.

The sermons which are here printed are not presented to the reader as they were originally prepared. They are much longer. In preaching, public worship claiming, as it should, the larger portion of the time, the preacher, ordinarily, is only able to treat in a superficial manner a great subject, or he has to break it up in sections and deal with them in a succession of addresses. But the necessity of these interruptions in the unity and continuity ceases when the discourse is transferred to the printed page. Then the various parts of the one theme can be advantageously combined and a measurable degree of completeness be imparted to the whole.

This course I have followed in the present volume, with the result that each sermon represents the union of two or

three, and with the further gain, I think, of greater thoroughness, clearness and cohesion.

I can only pray that this contribution to the International Pulpit may serve to remind Christians on both sides of the Atlantic that they are confronting similar problems, that they are bound together by a common faith, a common trial, and a common duty; and that if they are true to themselves and their Lord, they may hope soon to exclaim with the Greek poet:

"Night is past, behold the day!"

Grateful acknowledgment is here made to my fellow minister in the Gospel, James M. Stifler, for his kindness in seeing this book through the press.

GEORGE C. LORIMER.

The Modern Crisis in Religion

I

ON MODERNIZING CHRISTIANITY

"Until the time of reformation."—*Hebrews 9 : 10.*

RELIGION did not originate with Christianity. It existed long before the angels' song sounded over the fair Bethlehem land, long before the pathetic story of the cross touched the deepest and most sacred emotions of humanity, and long before the resurrection of a humble peasant preacher confirmed the hope of immortality. And where these glad tidings of peace on earth, of freedom from sin and deliverance from death have not as yet been heard religion still exists, disfigured doubtless by many errors, gross superstitions and degrading rites, but differentiating man from the brute and relating him to the spiritual mysteries of the universe.

Christianity is the highest expression and truest interpretation of religion, beyond which there cannot be anticipated anything grander or more worthy the homage of mankind. When it appeared, that of which it was the inspired and loftiest embodiment had reached a serious crisis. Religion was in a bad way, as it often had been before, not only among the Hebrews but also among the Greeks and Romans. It is true that St. Paul in this Scripture has exclusively in view the spiritual condition of

his kinsmen; but, with only slight modification, his representations are as applicable to the cults of Babylonian, Persian, Syrian, Egyptian, Hellenist. The augurs were laughing in each others' faces, the altars of gods innumerable were being abandoned, the mythologies were being accepted at their true value, and many temples were opening their gates to the lovers of the spectacular and the sensual.

Though this skepticism was not paralleled among the Jews, nevertheless various misleading ideas had obtained currency that rendered the ancient faith as interpreted by them increasingly incredible. Not a few of their leaders had fallen into an unwarranted and extreme literalism. They had restricted true worship to the Temple; they had come to connect the inner purity of man with the blood of slaughtered animals; they had perverted the Sabbath from being a joyous day of rest to a dreary day of wearisome observances; and they had multiplied exactions and burdens which stifled the spiritual life and miseducated and debased the conscience. Such perversions could not continue. For a season the mass of the people might hold to them. National pride, race prejudice and religious bigotry might constrain them to defend what in their sober moments they could not really believe. In spite of their loyalty to Moses they were anxious for a change. This dissatisfaction is revealed in their avidity to hear Christ; and though unrealized by them they were on the eve of a stupendous crisis.

The apostle does not deny the crisis. He recognizes it and studies it. He sees that it had its origin in the singular infatuation that "meats, drinks and divers washings and carnal ordinances" are all sufficient. Straightway, therefore, he proceeds to explain the real object of these external observances, shows their insufficiency to

cleanse the conscience and reminds the Hebrews that they were designed to be of temporary duration—until the time of reformation; and he declares that the reformation promised, and certainly needed, had come.

This reformation was Christianity.

While in a very real sense Christianity was a new religion in the days of St. Paul, in another, following his suggestion, it was a corrective, a revision and a modernization of the old. It met the moral needs and the intellectual demands of the times; it resented and resisted the unhallowed caricatures of the holiest of mysteries; and it furnished a heavenly and imperishable answer to those fantastic and bewildering conceptions which were irreconcilable with spiritual life and happiness. All the world then looked on it as a novelty, as a strange heresy, and derided it as a thing of yesterday.

The centuries have moved onward and our faith is no longer young. It is now somewhat scarred and wrinkled with age, and its shoulders are a trifle bowed with the weight of years. There are also those among us who think that Christianity is now over-antiquated, that she is too old-fashioned, and that possibly there ought to be done for her what she in her youth did for the Jewish religion and for the cults of the pagan world. To be more specific it is charged that she insists on identifying herself with bygone ages, and that she is archaic, mediæval and hopelessly past the grand climacteric. To remedy this alleged superannuation and second childhood, no end of nostrums are proposed, from the running of a woodyard to the appointment of a theatrical annex, and from the elaboration of a ritual to the abbreviation of the sermon, already slowly vanishing towards extinction. The demand is for progressive churches, for churches adapted to the new time, and for churches that are thoroughly modern.

The Church has gone far in this direction during the past hundred years, notwithstanding the critics to the contrary. It may be that she has not gone far enough; but to overlook what she has done is inexcusable. Were a consensus of opinion taken, I am sure that her leaders, from the Pope to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and from the Archbishop to the unprelatical captains of Nonconformity, would agree that she ought to be in touch with her age, and ought, as far as right and truth will allow, to conform her thought to the advanced thinking of the schools and not to cling to embarrassing and non-essential antiquated notions and policies.

But even this may be overdone. There is some apprehension that its legitimate bounds have been transgressed already, and we are naturally led to inquire to what degree, and in what manner should we consent to

The Modernizing of Christianity.

As in the Jewish faith a serious crisis reigned when John the Baptist declared that the axe was laid at the root of the tree, so now Christianity is passing through another, and one, if not equally momentous, sufficiently grave to occasion considerable solicitude. It cannot be denied by any one conversant with the facts that there is such a crisis. The most superficial acquaintance with current literature will convince the extremest optimist that in the estimation of the public, religion, particularly of the evangelical type, is contending against fierce odds and does not seem to have vitality enough to maintain its authority and influence.

It is claimed that there are signs of disintegration and final collapse; that the churches are full of half-hearted members who never permit their religion to interfere with their business or pleasure; that the ministry is not calling

to its ranks men of the highest ability; that education is rapidly superseding the function of preaching; that clergymen themselves avoid discussing doctrine or only with faltering breath reaffirm the distinctive teachings of the faith; that the Bible is no longer what it was, an unimpeached and trustworthy Teacher; that supernatural conversion is slowly giving way to the rationalistic theory of evolution; that many congregations are chronically impecunious and that worshippers do not give to the cause of Christ in proportion to their expenditures in other directions; and that there prevails almost everywhere throughout Christendom an air of apathy and indifference, of skepticism and agnosticism.

Assuredly there is a crisis. It prevails without as well as within, and probably it exists in the world because it is manifest in the church. The neglected sanctuaries, the desecrated Sabbaths, the increase of theatres, and the destructive critical spirit of many writers, all clearly indicate that if Christianity is not involved in a struggle for existence, she is so beset behind and before with difficulties that her survival if she survives will be preeminently the survival of the fittest. But is it possible for her to come out of the conflict as she went in? Is it not more than likely that she will be modified by the very troubles through which she is passing? This is always the case in nature. The animal strives, and the strife evolves a stronger sense or a greater capacity, and perhaps a new organ or a new energy. So will it be in religion.

Christianity is being influenced, colored, shaped for good or evil by her contact with the modern world, by her environment and by the various conflicts in which she is engaged. She is being in a sense modernized, whether she chooses to be or not. It is for her to determine whether she will yield absolutely, become as clay in the

hand of the potter, and take that form which is imparted to her, and which may rob her of every semblance of her real self, or whether she will awake to the significance of the hour, decide to modernize herself, and do so in such a way as to retain her identity and yet regain her hold on mankind.

If Christianity is to do this intelligently she must familiarize herself with the *zeit geist* or time-spirit, must understand its peculiar character, and adjust herself to it according to its favorable or unfavorable action on the fundamental verities of religion.

What is meant by the time-spirit?

Hegel has defined it as "the Spirit of God realizing itself in the history of man." This is rather the Eternal Spirit manifesting itself in time, whereas the term we employ suggests a product of time unfolding itself in the earth and in the history of its peoples.

As the surface of the globe reflects its own heat and tempers the atmosphere, as the sum total of the stars creates a soft and interfused light which imparts a silver haze to the canopy of night; as flowers sweeten the air with their breath, and deep morass and tropic jungle exhale their deadly malarias, so from ruling ideas, ideals, ambitions, habits, customs, there arises at each distinct period of history a temper, a way of thinking, acting, feeling, a subtle emanation from the totality of the world's mental and moral tendencies, which, for lack of a better name, we call the time-spirit.

This spirit may be devout, rationalistic, superstitious, reverent, chivalrous and romantic, or it may be speculative, scientific, commercial and sensuous. It may regard the universe as the temple of God to be filled with holy thoughts and heroic deeds, or it may treat it simply as a theatre where everything is fictitious and designed to

satisfy the senses. Whatever its character, however, it stands to reason that it will in some degree affect religion and the esteem in which it is held. As well expect a sailing ship not to be influenced by the weather or an orchard to be untouched by the frost, as to suppose that the church can remain wholly intact and inviolate through the varying moods of the ages. A change of climate will lead to a change of attire and often of diet, and will relax or stimulate physical energy.

The variation of temperature will modify the tone of violin or organ, and will occasionally cause a compass to point in a wrong direction. Likewise the time-spirit may depress or quicken the energies of the church, may impel her to alter or abandon her ritualistic draperies, may incline her to a new outlook on life, and may, so to speak, constrain her to sail on a fresh tack, or to sail earthward in answer to an uncertain compass instead of keeping steadfastly towards heaven. She may be likened to the North Cape. That point of land, reaching out into Arctic seas, bold, jagged, ragged, beneath the hybernal midnight sun, is not wholly bleak and savage; for the Gulf Stream flows through the chilly waters, surges against the granite base, and tempering with warmth the atmosphere, adorns and beautifies its sides with soft grasses, stubby bushes and modest flowers. No less susceptible is the church to her surroundings and to the streams of influence that may clothe her with loveliness, or may blight and wither her fairest graces.

But in recognizing the potency of the time-spirit and in yielding to its legitimate demands, she is not warranted in surrendering herself absolutely and without question to its moulding force. It is not inspired, not infallible. There are eras and occasions when it needs to be resisted. The church is not necessarily bound to deride it, antagonize it

and cling to thoughts and speech as foreign to an age as a caravel for an Atlantic voyage, pine torches for illumination and the flashing of beacon lights from hilltops for telegraphy. She may act as absurdly as a man who, exposed to torrid heat, declines to remove his furs, or as the mariner who in the teeth of the storm scuttles his ship rather than sail under bare poles. Such foolish conservatism is childish. On the other hand, however, she may be so enamored of the time-spirit as to have no mind of her own, and in her hot zeal to eliminate from her theology and her methods everything alien to it may cease to be Christian. If the time-spirit lends itself to a truer, saner, sweeter, grander, broader type of Christianity, its ministrations are to be welcomed, but if its free operation would leave no Christianity whatever, then an intelligent and earnest challenge must be interposed.

How far, then, and in what particulars is the church bound to respect the time-spirit? Or, to phrase it differently, in what ways and within what restrictions is the modernizing process allowable? What is permissible and what is not? What may be yielded and what retained and cherished? The importance of these inquiries grows out of the fact that the impression prevails that the present religious crisis can only be ended by the most radical changes. That some changes are imperative we nothing doubt, and that they may in some measure meet the existing crisis we cheerfully allow. But what are the changes needed? Within what limits are they desirable and feasible?

In considering these questions I can only, in this preliminary sermon, advance certain elementary principles, the application of which will receive more detailed exposition as we come in subsequent discourses to deal with specific aspects of the crisis we are studying.

Christianity should modernize her speech. Now, as on the day of Pentecost, every man has the right to hear the gospel in the current language of the day, and the folly of talking in an unknown tongue is as pronounced now as when St. Paul condemned it. There is nothing sacred in vocabularies, and to insist on using antiquated phraseology when grave issues are being discussed is a mischievous blunder. Neither the common people, nor hardly any other people, will attend church if the preacher is obscure and unintelligible. There is point in the criticism uttered by the Scotch Elder that "his minister was invisible all the week and incomprehensible all the Sunday." Obsolete terms, traditional cant, cryptic sayings, and the so-called "language of Zion," should be steadily avoided. The idiom of the street and field, the words that are in common use among all classes and conditions of men, should be sanctified to the cause of truth and enlightenment.

The apostles took the Greek tongue as it was spoken in the first century and made it the vehicle of glorious ideas; and if that could be done with such a medium it must be comparatively easy to clothe these same ideas in the vernacular of our times. Religion should do what King James's revisers did,—translate the eternal message into the ordinary speech of the masses. This does not warrant the use of slang by which public discourse is often degraded, nor the affectation of extreme classicism by which vigor and clearness are often sacrificed. The vulgarity of coarseness on the one hand and the showiness of superfineness on the other is almost equally fatal to real power. Educated people are shocked by the first, and the untaught are roused to ribald mockery by the second, while neither class is instructed, moved or interested. I am inclined to the belief that the average church attendant fails less in comprehending the theological dialectics of the

orthodox pulpit than he does in grasping the significance of the finical, fanciful and finely filtrated speech which in certain religious schools seems to be more highly valued than ideas.

Modernity in language which the *zeit geist* demands does not call for silly fastidiousness and foppery in style, neither does it prohibit the employment of virile Scripture terms, such as "justification," "adoption," "regeneration," or "atonement." There is a place for such expressions. They have been objected to, but only where the conceptions they represent have been challenged or repudiated. That is, the objection lies not so much against the terminology as against what it stands for. Nor is it at all difficult of comprehension. Something is surely to be expected of the learner. When science speaks it assumes that the scholar will give attention and try to follow the teacher. Technical words may be avoided as far as possible, but some, at least in modified form, must be introduced for the sake of accuracy and clearness. So, likewise, in religion. But the student must do some thinking on his own account. He cannot divest himself of his responsibility as set forth by Christ: "Take heed how ye hear."

The Rev. Canon Newbolt a few months ago declared that "if it be true that sermons are a failure and that the ministry of preaching is losing favor, the cause of that failure is in the hearer rather than in the preacher." He illustrated his position by the parable of the "Seed," and showed "that in three cases out of four that seed will be wasted; only the fault is not in the sower but in the soil." "Think of it, when you criticise the sermon over your five o'clock tea—when you say, I never heard a sermon in my life which did me any good, and sigh for their general abolition. Think of it; there was nothing the matter with

the seed; the sower did his best, but in three cases out of four the character of the soil was such that it was so much labor thrown away."

The canon may have pushed his comparison too far, yet there is real ground for his complaint. Congregations, I fear, have been encouraged to regard themselves as mere receptacles into which the teacher is to pour his discourse. They do not feel themselves bound to cooperate with the preacher. If he can enlighten them, thrill them, absorb their interest, let him do so. But they are not inclined to assist him. No wonder, then, that to such stolid indifference and apathy the shortest sermon is tedious and the most brilliant dull and meaningless.

Christianity, likewise, should modernize her thought. I do not say that she should abandon it, corrupt it, hide it, or in any way betray it. She can preserve it practically intact, and yet by rendering it less antiquated commend it to the time-spirit of the twentieth century.

Balfour in his Cambridge address declares that "no century has seen so great a change in our intellectual apprehension of the world in which we live" as the nineteenth. That is, he maintains that a new conception has been reached which stands in the same relation to our age as that of Galileo and Bacon to the seventeenth century. This fundamental change in our point of view is quite sufficiently expressed by the term "evolution." Renan refers to its radical character when he says: "It consists in the substitution of the category of evolution for the category of being; formerly everything was considered as being; people spoke of law, of religion, of politics, of poetry in an absolute fashion. Now, everything is considered as in process of formation." We are not, we are becoming, and nothing is final, only proximate and moving towards finality.

It is impossible to deny that this is the dominating hypothesis of the modern world. Is it possible for Christianity to adjust her great thought or thoughts to it? Can she reveal her true self through it and speak its language? The impulsive answer is negative, and yet the *Edinburgh Review* reminds us that "the doctrine of development, treated years afterwards in the physiological order by Darwin, was anticipated in a theological treatise." It may safely be said that Möhler and Newman would never have committed themselves to a principle unreconcilable with the essential teachings of the faith. That a case of antagonism can be made out I do not dispute, but that it necessarily and actually exists I do not concede. As Mr. Stephens has said on the limitations of evolution: "Man is still in the presence of infinity and eternity, life is a long dream. Heaven and hell are behind the veil of phenomena, which at every step, one finds vanish into the vast abyss of ever present mystery;" and he has the same burdens to carry, the same sins to resist, the same temptations to encounter, and the same death to die. Christianity is still the only power that can support and guide him in his struggle, and in the end afford him a safe footing over the abyss.

Why not, then, cast the ancient thought in this new mould? Why not enunciate it in the speech of current science and philosophy? Why continue to state it in terms obsolete to the period or unnecessarily divorce it from the loftiest speculations of the age? To modernize it after this fashion would be to gain for it a larger and more sympathetic hearing, and would in my opinion bring out undreamed of spiritual beauties.

Christian thought thus modernized would no longer regard creation as a fiat but as a process, a process continuing to this day, and the Creator as immanent as well as

transcendent; as the cause, not only of beginnings, but of the entire series of sequences. This idea rebukes the fanaticism that fails to see God outside the exceptional and extraordinary; and makes more distinct the great fact that he is so actually in the working of every natural law that it seems to be the rule of his providence for the supernatural to be swallowed up and become incarnated in the natural; and that this method is as glorious to him as any number of startling, sporadic marvels. When the old thought is placed in this new setting we perceive that it is only in accord with the divine order of things for miracles to cease as man's intelligence and capacity increase, and for all supernatural interpositions, whether in the soul or in life, in the way of revelation or a regeneration, to be effected through human means and agencies.

More than this, the concession to the time-spirit for which I plead, will make it plainer that man is the end of a series of developments and is necessary to explain the universe as a whole, and in a sense *is not*, but only is becoming; that he must pass through the new birth and the grave in order to attain eternal fullness of life. Instead of its obscuring the function of suffering in the progress of mankind, it will make manifest that pain and anguish are the price paid for every gain attained in the realm of physics or of spirit. The history of creation is besmeared with blood, as the history of humanity is, and evolution does not darken the atoning efficacy of Christ's death, but rather has placed it in a truer and sublimer light. For, as President Hyde has said: "Vicarious suffering is not an arbitrary contrivance by which Christ bought a formal pardon for the world. It is a universal law, of which the cross of Christ is the symbol. It is the price some one must pay for every step of progress and for every conquest over evil the world shall ever see." It is the climax of a divine

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method, and the modern view of it renders more credible the assumption of faith, that as the sufferings of a man are of higher value and achieve higher ends than the sufferings of an animal, so the passion of Christ—a being, exceptional, unique, glorious, divine,—may be expected to accomplish more and more wonderfully than the sufferings of a man.

Christianity ought further to modernize her activities. I believe she is increasingly anxious to do so. Special lines of action are determined for her usually by the age, and means and methods are frequently suggested by what appeals to the common sense and taste of society. Here again the time-spirit is in evidence, and while it is not to be slavishly heeded, it often indicates what is the duty at hand, and how best it can be discharged. There was an era when the time-spirit was so coarse, animalistic and cruel, that the church tried to live her life of holiness in the desert. There was a period when it was so superstitious, violent and reactionary, so priest-ridden and oppressive, that she took up arms against herself and gave to the nations the Reformation. There also was a season so cursed with chattel slavery, so blighted by ignorance and so merciless to childhood that she was compelled to thunder her anathemas from the pulpit against the tyrants great and small, rich and poor. Her activities have varied and have been various, but always permeated with the sweet spirit of love. Her methods, measures, means, have been, and ever should be, adapted to the peculiar conditions of the age and place in which she works. "New occasions teach new duties," and she, with open eyes for the vision, should not hesitate to employ whatever legitimate weapons are within her reach.

The indisposition to do this in former times—and to some extent to-day—accounts in part for the present relig-

ious crisis. Let this hesitancy cease. Christianity is in a new world, a world very different from that of the first century, or the sixteenth, and if she would be successful she must not ignore the fact. Not long ago the time-spirit was romantic, when Frederick Schlegel idealized the past, when Napoleon regarded himself as a new Charlemagne, when Chateaubriand embodied in his "Atala" the romance of Christianity, and when Overbeck and the pre-Raphaelites revived in their pictures the mysticism of Fra Angelico. The curtain speedily fell on this painted scene. Sentimentalism went out of date and hard realism usurped the stage, the realism of hard facts, figures, and statistics in society, and of the brutal nakedness of Zola, Verlaine, Ibsen and Nietzsche in literature. Mankind has entered on a season of disenchantment and disillusion. Religion is being judged by what it does, not by what it claims to be; and by what it does to-day, not by what it may have done yesterday. That church which by its offices deepens the moral life of the community, that carries most of hope and joy to the lowly, that reclaims wanderers from God and duty will surely attain to primacy in the new century. The picturesque, the histrionic, the archæological features of religion, and the controversies about "orders," "succession," "vestments," are not foremost in the thoughts of serious men to-day, and their prominence anywhere, with the noisy strife to which occasionally they give rise, strikes the modern mind as sounding brass and clanging cymbal in a world that is perishing for love.

Nor should it be forgotten that the present time-spirit is also liberalistic and altruistic. Back of the flagrant wrongs that are hourly committed, back of the greed, cunning, selfishness, harshness and bitterness of the age, there is a deep spirit of humanism unparalleled in the past. The same hand that squeezes the laborer and doles out a paltry

wage, binds up his wounds, founds a library, or furnishes him with a hospital. Injustice may reign, but it is wonderfully tempered by benevolence. The tendency is to judge leniently, to make allowances, to abate prejudices, to treat dispassionately differences of opinion, and to glorify heroism and self-sacrifice. These amiable features of the period are undoubtedly contradicted at every turn, but their frequent recurrence and the homage they receive may be taken as proof that the nobler side of man's nature recognizes their right to supremacy. And as to the church —society expects that they will preeminently grace her, that in her life they will receive the amplest expression, and in her work the fullest exemplification. It is not enough for her theoretically to assent. She must do more. It is for her to find out in what way she can give practical force to modern humanism, and by what means she can intensify it and free it from its mixture with things mercenary and base, and, in a word, transform the time-spirit into the very spirit of her blessed Master.

This is no easy task. It is one beset with peril. At every step of the way, at every stage of the process, the danger is that we may be carried too far by our enthusiasm for modernity, and may irreparably disfigure and deface that which we are anxious to strengthen and exalt. Let me, therefore, point out some restrictions, some limitations, which may guard us from the excesses and from the extravagances that scandalize and vitiate the movement we are commending.

Christianity must be careful not so to modernize herself as to obscure her distinctive character. She is of the heavens, heavenly, and has no business to become earthy. It is no more necessary for her to be untrue to herself than it is for a man to be false to his deepest convictions. She is not to masquerade in the world's tinsel and finery for

the sake of influence and applause. Never is she to forget her supernatural origin and her dependence on the supernatural still. He who is immanent in nature cannot but be peculiarly so in the church. Indeed, the normal life of the church should render clearer and more incontrovertible His presence and influence in all His works. The physical universe may be likened to a watch, where the mechanism and the mainspring are concealed by the case, and where only the hands are visible giving evidence by their movement of the active force within. The spiritual world should be like a watch placed under a glass cover, through which every wheel, every jewel, every delicate part is distinctly disclosed.

The church should not, therefore, hesitate to teach, that as the supernatural antedated what we call creation and wrought itself into natural forces and natural laws, so the same supernaturalism begins the individual religious life and relates it to fixed principles of thought and activity to which it is to conform. Prayer is the breath of this new life, and when religious communities seek to ignore it, or to explain away its significance, consequently neglecting the family altar and sneering at the prayer-meeting as out of date, the real character of Christianity is fatally obscured. For outside of the church, deep in the heart of humanity, there is a feeling that a religion which disclaims any real and direct relation to the invisible, and differs only from other institutions by the higher ethics it inculcates, cannot be entitled to very serious attention.

The extent of this feeling has been strikingly illustrated of late in the declining power of the most advanced evangelism. That protracted meetings of recent date have not justified the expectations of their promoters cannot be successfully denied. Many explanations have been given the public, but these have lacked the element of conviction.

In the older time conversion and salvation were represented in terms which called forth the profoundest emotions, and appealed to the religious consciousness of the people. Excesses we admit were not uncommon. But the spiritual experiences of the day were so deep and vivid that they left a lasting impression; and they invested religion itself with a seriousness and weightiness which more than compensated for any incidental vagaries. The change that has taken place, originating probably in a desire to make salvation easy, and to avoid the extremes into which certain frenetical evangelicals were falling, has been of the most radical and regrettable kind.

To this Professor George Adam Smith refers in his "Life of Henry Drummond." After describing the really great work in Scotland of Mr. Dwight L. Moody, he takes up the men who followed him and who tried to imitate him. He has very little patience with them, advocating, as they do, what he terms an "artificial scheme of salvation." "They whittle away," he says, "one after another of the essentials of faith, and call man to a reception of salvation in which there is neither conscience nor love. In their extremity they likened the acceptance of Christ to the taking of a five-pound note offered you for nothing, or of a glass of water, or of an orange." He adds: "Religion turned out to be a big confidence trick"—"and to a Scotchman a religion without conscience is beneath contempt."

In this respect other people are very much like Scotchmen. For a season they may listen to teachers who deal in a free and easy way with the mysteries of our faith. They may be charmed by the novelty of their views, and try to look as though they had been transformed by the truth. The craze does not last long. It ends abruptly. Converts discover that after all the root of the matter is

not in them. The sober second thought of the community looks more thoroughly into this theological legerdemain, and puts it away with something very much like scorn. It will not do. It misrepresents and falsifies the genius of our faith, and so disguises it that practically it is unrecognizable.

Christianity, while preserving her character, must be mindful not so to modernize herself as to conceal her essential message. There are many truths which she holds in common with other cults. She may, as I think she does, carry them farther and unfold them more completely than has been done by her rivals and forerunners. Nevertheless, she is at one with them in several philosophical and ethical elementary principles, and these she is under obligation to inculcate. Here and there we meet with literary men that have never given much thought to the subject, and a number of clever secularists that have no appreciation of spiritual things, who insist that the age has outgrown all religious teachings except those pertaining to conduct in the present world, and that the church should confine her ministrations to these. Our advisers pretend to speak for the age. And yet out of 450,000,000 professed Christians in the world only a handful have adopted this way of thinking. The views of the outside multitudes, if they have any, are hardly entitled to consideration, as they are too absorbed in their temporal interests for any value to attach to their opinion. Nor is this recommendation new. It has often been made, and sometimes it has been acted upon; but never with encouraging results. Plainly stated, it is the programme of failure. Why should it be adopted when it has nothing to show for itself? Why experiment anew with what has never succeeded in renewing and saving humanity and never can?

The church is bound to give to these universal teach-

ings their due place and proportion; but she is under special obligation to magnify and make clear what is unique and original in her message. This message is quite sufficiently expressed by Christ in His memorable words:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him."

This is something more than morality. It is life, pardon, a complete clearance and the beginning of real righteousness.

A writer as radical as Prof. Paul Wernle of Basel,[1] while apparently rejecting the atonement, regards forgiveness as really central and vital to our faith. He refers to the place it occupied in Jewish theology, and quotes admiringly the splendid sixth petition:

> "Forgive us, our Father,
> For we have sinned.
> Forgive us, O King,
> For we have done unrighteously.
> Dost Thou not forgive and pardon gladly?
> Praised be Thou, Lord, most merciful,
> That Thou dost pardon so greatly."

Further, he represents Jesus as confirming and enlarging this conception. "He turned the theory contained in the Jewish prayer into a fact, and gave to all that were about Him the certainty of pardon, courage and joy. . . . Jesus has made it perfectly plain that the child of God is separated by no sin from God's love, as little as the child of an earthly father from that father's love." . . . "Nay, more, man would cease to be in the right relation to God were he ever to forego his claim upon the divine

[1] "Beginnings of Christianity," p. 108.

pardon. These are bold articles to put in any creed, yet they are only fraught with danger for those who know not the God of Jesus."

It is remarkable, however, that so brilliant a writer, interpreting the sacred documents as he would any other reliable documents penned by honest men, and reaching this conclusion, should have failed to read what is with equal legibility affirmed, that through "the blood" of Christ we attain to this forgiveness. If on the authority of the gospels and epistles—simply as human products—we believe in pardon, on the same authority we should believe in atonement. They are two terms of the same message, and without both the message is incomplete and faulty. Wernle himself admits that pardon as taught by the Hebrews was inoperative to pacify the conscience. "What was the use of fine words if the individual had no sense of personal certainty, and was unable to derive thence the power to live a glad and joyous life." How then was it possible for Christ by the mere use of "fine words,"—and remember that there are no words of His on the subject as fine as those attributed to prophets in the Old Testament—to satisfy the moral sense and purge away the misery of guilt? He must have introduced into the proclamation something new. What?

There is only one answer possible:—Death, sacrifice, blood, an offering made once for all in the end of the old ages for the redemption of the world. The knowledge of it and faith in it were needed in the past; they are needed still; and impotent and faithless the Christian message whenever its significance is minimized or lost. St. Paul gloried in the cross; and it will be a bitter day for humanity when the church shall hide it, apologize for it, and explain away its only possible meaning as though it were her shame.

Christianity, finally, must be heedful not so to modernize herself as to becloud her supreme object. She is being told by tongues innumerable to-day what her real business on earth is. Eloquent individuals who have never studied her traditions, and who have no appreciation of her genius, are trying to convince her that she is only a social and moral imperialism whose mission it is to conquer the inequalities, the injustices, the insincerities and indecencies of society. She is told by one clique that her true programme is the socialistic propaganda; by another she is informed that she ought to stand by Labor Unions; by another that her duty lies in the direction of municipal reform agitation, and by yet another that her chief concern should be how to exploit the philanthropic rich for the benefit of the poor. All of them call on her not to be visionary, but to be practical, it being quietly taken for granted that that alone is practical which promotes improved housing for the lowly, better sanitation and fewer hours of work, and that that is necessarily visionary which seeks the renewal of humanity in the image of God and the development of its loftiest and most self-reliant qualities.

That the church should strive for social amelioration, that she should do her utmost to improve temporal conditions, and that she should antagonize each specific evil and wrong of the time is cheerfully conceded. But she has a programme of her own. While she may give her support to special measures of reform and should always do so when they are sound, it is her plan and purpose to begin, not on the surface but at the roots of things, not on the effects but on the causes, not on the external crystallization and organization of human infirmity and moral weakness, but on the internal—on the heart from whence they spring. Her theory is: Cleanse the sources and the river will be pure; maintain the power in the power-house

and traffic will keep on the move; supply and fill the reservoir and the homes of the citizens will not lack for water. This is her supreme object. Hence, her belief in spiritual renewals; hence her confidence in education; and hence her constant and varied endeavors to get at the individual, at his conscience, his better nature and every element of his being that can be enlisted on the side of personal honor and rectitude.

The church has no captious controversy with other schemes. She only claims the right to have one of her own. Neither does she decline to support any righteous measure for social improvement; but she is, or she ought to be, unwilling to abandon her particular plan of action, and descend to the level of a mere follower, tramping at the heels of all kinds of social agitators.

At the Paris Exposition a few years ago some friends invited me to see the artistic fireworks and illuminations. The scene was striking, gorgeous and picturesque. I was immensely taken, as were the crowds, with the manifold effects wrought by red and blue fire, by the flaming of rockets and bursting of the explosives. The gardens, statuary, booths, cafés, were fantastically illuminated, and often the faces of the people shone with singular distinctness. Influenced by a sudden impulse my eyes wandered from the carnival of light to the heavens where the stars were shining in their solemn splendor. At once the contrast between the evanescent pageant around me and the steady, impassive glory above affected me profoundly. The fête was not useless, it served an immediate end, it brought into relief many beauties and imparted a joy to many hearts. But its fires would soon be quenched, and its flames die away. Not so with the stars. How incomparably grander this noiseless stellar host to these poor sputtering, garish pyrotechnics! When these have ceased to dazzle and de-

light, the stars will still be shining, and will through countless ages continue to do what no fireworks can accomplish,—guide the doubting traveller on the mountain-side, and the disheartened sailor on the sea, and draw the thoughts of men into fellowship with Him whose glory they proclaim, and whose soundless voice they are.

Does this simple analogue call for labored exposition? Does it need a master in Israel to understand this thing? There are many lights enkindled by human hands and many momentary flashes of human sympathy that brighten the world and bring gladness to the lowly. Every Christian man will cheerfully approve and help whatever tends to convert the night into day. But he must know how ephemeral these specific remedies are. They come of the time-spirit, and they will change with the time-spirit. Nor is it possible for them to supersede the steadfast shining of the "Morning Star," the effulgence of the Christ streaming through the church, by which the sinful and sorrowing are reached and saved, and by which, at last, when all poor human measures fail, they are led triumphantly through the valley of the shadow of death to the eternal fellowship of the saints in light.

Within limitations such as these it is not only legitimate for Christianity to modernize herself, but for the sake of her mission she should do so.

II

DECAY AND DEATH CONDITIONING LIFE AND GROWTH

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit."—*John 12: 24.*

IT was the hour of apparent triumph. Although the procession was an impromptu, humble affair, and a patient ass, palm branches and tumultuous hosannas a poor substitute for war chariots of iron, for tramping lictors and marching legions welcoming a victorious Cæsar, nevertheless, such as it was it doubtless filled the souls of the disciples with exultant hopes and with visions of their hero ruling in majesty over the kingdoms of the world. Indeed, they were not the only ones deceived by the enthusiasm of the hour. When the Pharisees witnessed the ovation our Lord received as He entered the city of Jerusalem, they spitefully exclaimed: "Behold, we prevail nothing; lo, the world is gone after Him."

Certain Greeks, likewise, gave color to this impression. When the excitement was at its height they separated themselves from the surging, singing crowds, and approaching Philip, expressed a wish to see Jesus. It must have seemed to our Lord's bewildered followers that the predictions of the prophets were being fulfilled, and that nations were already coming to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising. These Hellenists must be the first-fruits of the Gentiles, the advance guard and har-

bingers of the hosts redeemed from heathenism. Surely the completion of the promise will be witnessed in a little while, as it is written: "The isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee."

Alas, for the vanity of human expectations. How often the intoxicating hopes of immediate and glorious success are suddenly dashed to pieces. The anticipated fortune that seemed to be within easy reach fails to materialize, and the fame that was to crown with laurel the young poet, painter or sculptor on the morrow does not come, is postponed till the day after, or the day after that, and may never be his at all. And as in other instances, this brief dream of world-wide Messianic conquests was abruptly terminated by unceremonious reality.

Jesus Himself was the first to break the spell and disillusionize His friends. He had been told of the presence and the desire of the Greeks. Of them He takes no direct notice; but, probably detecting the note of exultation in the voice of His disciples, He replies to them in a way that leaves no ground for any confidence in the present or early triumph of the new religion. His depressing and discouraging answer is recorded in my text. Freely paraphrased it is as though He said:

"Do not for a moment imagine that the end for which I came has been attained, that the goal has been reached and that the crown has been won. Do not misunderstand these paltry processionings and this short-lived show of popularity. My kingdom is not victorious. Nor will it attain supremacy without many drawbacks, trials and vicissitudes. Neither will it steadily advance, like the dawning of the morning, but will be subject to manifold

interruptions and retrogressions. It will have to die repeatedly if it is to live permanently, and it will pass through various stages of decay if it is finally to flourish and bear much fruit. 'Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die it abideth by itself alone.' There is no expansion, no development possible to it until it is planted. 'But if it die, it beareth much fruit.' When it is cast into darkness and obscurity, and when it decays, disintegrates, then its grander life shall spring forth, richer in fruitage, fairer in beauty."

The principle thus enunciated He applies to His own position and career.

"I Myself shall not move upward along an even, undeviating and undeflecting path and so attain the throne. The route before Me is circuitous. I must descend as low as the tomb if I am to rise as high as heaven. I must be lifted up from the earth if I am to draw all men unto Me. The cross and the grave are the downward steps by which I shall climb upward to the right hand of God. Like the grain of wheat, I must die if I am to live and live in conquering majesty, and not until then shall even a beginning be made to the bringing in of the fullness of the Gentiles."

Frequently since these memorable words were spoken the friends of Christianity have imagined that their faith was on the eve of world-wide dominion and would never more be subject to serious backsets. These sanguine dreams, however, have thus far only ended in disappointment. The victory has never been as great as was supposed, and sometimes even the hosannas have mockingly led to Calvary. Christianity now is not in the truest and highest sense the religion of the present. All that can be fairly claimed is that she is the religion of the future. That hope she has never abated. She ever heralds ap-

proaching millenniums, believes in her own destiny, and though clouds and darkness beset her way, and though evils and perils encompass her on every side —

> " She reels not in the storm of warring words,
> She brightens at the clash of 'yes' or 'no,'
> She sees the best that glimmers through the worst,
> She feels the sun is hid but for the night,
> She spies the summer through the winter bud,
> She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
> She hears the lark within the songless shell,
> She finds the fountain where they wailed, 'Mirage.' "

But there are numbers among her own people, and of those who are friendly to her, who have to-day no eyes for these optimistic visions and no convictions of returning vigor and conquering energy. The pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme. Instead of the too great assurance born of partial successes a feeling of too great depression resulting from partial failures has been engendered. It is feared that at last the shadow on the dial of Ahaz can never be reversed, and that Christianity is slowly dying without hope of resurrection. We are reminded that civilizations and religions have ended in total extinction and eclipse, and that animal types and races, worn out and crowded to the wall, have deteriorated beyond the point of resuscitation and have perished; and why may not the same fate overtake our faith in the near future?

This is the great question that is now uppermost in the minds of thousands. When Mr. John Kelman, notwithstanding his brave words in his book—" The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson "—writes of the present trend of opinion he is evidently harassed by many serious misgivings. Take these excerpts: " Owing to a great variety of causes, not a few thoughtful men and women have lost

their hold upon the religious beliefs which supported the courage of their fathers." And further: "One cause of the present decline from old beliefs is a spiritual debility, a lack of the power to take energetic hold on beliefs, even when reason has no fault to find with them." Surely debility is itself a bad sign, and if it increases how can we expect the present crisis to stop short of an appalling religious catastrophe?

But we must not lose heart of courage. It may be that the seed is once again undergoing the marvellous metamorphosis spoken of by Christ, and that the transition state will end in more glorious foliage and more abundant fruit. The present retrogression may only be preliminary to a greater progress. That we may ourselves judge whether this is probable or not, and that we may perceive our own relation to the possible outcome, let us consider the remarkable extent and the workings of our Lord's striking teaching that

Decay and Death Condition Life and Growth

In the vegetable world it is so well understood that it calls for no special vindication. Farmers, horticulturists and floriculturists recognize the principle and act upon it. They know the price they have to pay for success, and are willing to lose much that they may gain more. When the seed is in the ground and only the black soil rewards their scrutiny, when no sign of life appears for weeks, they do not despair and abandon their fields and gardens. Neither should Christians be despondent though the winter be dreary and the very smell of decay be in the air. They should be able to see the coming harvest through the cold and desolate season, and do their part by turning up the surface soil and exposing it to the sun that growth be not impeded.

Perhaps they may be more emboldened to trust, work and wait if they can only be made to see that the law involved in the development of the seed is equally applicable to a much wider field of life and activity. For it seems to be in every department of existence the rule that retrogression, relapses, recessions, decline, the retreat of the tide and the veering of the wind are closely linked with advancement and the return of high water.

Theodore Parker characterized the fall of Adam as "a fall upwards," and while in the sense intended the phrase may be objectionable, still through the grace of God, that descent has been made the occasion of a grander elevation than would otherwise have been obtained. And as already set forth of our Lord, He who was rich had to become poor that He might have riches for us all; He had to empty Himself that He might be the fullness that filleth all in all. The divine seed had to die before it could be fruitful. When He was ensnared and then engulfed in His black doom, His enemies rejoiced over his degradation. But they understood not the mystery. Like the fabled god He had to touch the earth that saving strength might be acquired. He bowed Himself to the shame of the grave that He might rise to the glory of the throne, and declined as deep as hades that He might advance to the height of heaven.

What was true of our Lord applies also to His disciples. Retrogression is fundamental to spiritual progress. The seed of the word must be planted in the heart for it to bear fruit in the renewed nature. Christ taught the doctrine of self-abnegation, that we must come down from our self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and become as nothing: but he who humbles himself shall be exalted. The soul casts out self and receives Christ, that is, surrenders dross for gold, poverty for affluence, sorrow

for joy. Paul sums up this doctrine in Romans when he declares that he has died to sin and so is alive to righteousness and that the life he lives is not his own, but the life of the Son of God. We may rest assured that the disregard of this fundamental condition of spiritual power in religious communities, as well as in individuals, is one of the causes of the existing apathy and inefficiency of Christian churches.

We shall, however, do injustice to this principle we are studying if we suppose that it is operative only in the field and in the Church. As I have already intimated, it may be detected in some form or other almost everywhere. The fact is that nowhere in the universe do we find steady, direct propulsion, with neither pauses nor pulsations. Light and sound do not travel in undeviating and unbending lines. They move in waves, each undulation being essential to their transmission. Also, as Rev. Hugh Macmillan[1] suggests, the lion crouches before he makes the deadly spring that his strength may be concentrated for the leap. Man instinctively draws back the arm when he would inflict a telling blow. Thus he gathers the force necessary for its delivery. The billows of the sea sink that they may rise and the descending motion is necessary to the ascending. The flow of the tide, also, is dependent on the refluent action of the waves, just as the decline of day is related to its beneficence. To Adam the first sunset must have been alarming, as the end of all things, even as now we shrink from encroaching darkness. Nevertheless, the night is as much required by the constitution of things as the day itself. The uninterrupted reign of the sun would work such chemical changes as would

[1] Mr. Macmillan's books on nature and religion are well worth reading, and I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness to him for suggestions in this section of the sermon.

prove disastrous to the earth. The withdrawal of light and heat for awhile affords repose and refreshing to the struggling particles of matter by reducing the temperature.

In a similar way winter is the refuge not the destroyer of summer. The earth would be overrun with vegetation but for its annual return, the soil would be exhausted and the curse of sterility would consume. Under such circumstances summer would cease to exist and we would have one vast Sahara. Likewise in religion too much uninterrupted prosperity and continuous favor with the world, constituted as we are, with our limitations, would tend to abate spirituality and the sense of dependence on God. When wealth flows into the Church, when society flatters and favors, and the days of struggle have ended, then she also may become incinerated, scorched, barren, and she would at such times inevitably perish, were it not for the night and the winter. When her revenues decline, her workers diminish and her existence seems to be precarious, then she is moved to consider, and to prepare for a better day. In obscurity, in meditation, she gathers up her strength for the renewal of her aggressive mission.

On a yet larger scale nature throws light on the problem of decay and growth. Evolution does not withhold an illuminating testimony. Among its most palpable disclosures is the important doctrine that the path of life has not uniformly been an ascending one. It has been checked, it has deteriorated, it has reverted to a lower plane. The wheels of nature have sometimes slipped backwards, and mighty hills have necessitated lowly valleys. Galton has written to prove that there is an interplay between degeneracy and improvement, and that overswift development is offset by recurring descent below the average of humanity. The children of tall parents are not always tall, and the

children of short parents are not always under height. Sometimes the reverse is true. But the evident struggle in the physical order is to preserve the man.

In the sphere of mental and moral qualities the same conflict is observable. The offspring of men of genius are not always, and indeed rarely, the equals of their sires, and mediocre parentage has been blessed and honored with a brilliant progeny. If the line of ascent was to continue on the high level uninterruptedly probably it would reach a climax in the production of a few men and women who would veritably be dominant and irresistible. This unrivalled oligarchy of intellect would subordinate all mankind to its sway, just as a few successive generations increasing without drawbacks in business sagacity and acquisitiveness, of the Rockefeller and Morgan order, would ultimately control the capital of the world. So, also, there may be a similar reason for special seasons of religious depression, that the golden mean of sanity, reverence and practical efficiency may be preserved.

Christianity has suffered much from alternations and extremes. But it is questionable whether the extreme of dullness and apathy is not needed at times to counteract the extreme of fanaticism and excitement. A generation gives itself to religious discussion and agitation, to convulsive and confusing revival meetings. Or the period is prolific in sensational leaders, faith healers, alleged "Elijahs," and other eccentric frenetics, and the heads of the people are filled with wild ideas, crazy dreams, and were not a halt called they would become raving maniacs. As a consequence, when things have ceased to be tolerable a reaction sets in, and churches settle back far below where they normally ought to be, into frigidity, formality and apathy. The religious life has apparently deteriorated. But may not the retrogression result in restoring the equi-

librium, and thus reinvigorate the life and minister to its more wholesome and permanent development?

There is another feature in these analogies entitled to some weight. Evolution reveals a persistent conservatism and a restorative tendency in its operations. Whatever changes may take place life itself endures. Particular organisms may fail of vital adaptation to environment. Eyes may disappear, as in the case of the fish in the silent river that flows through Mammoth Cave; a claw may vanish as in the history of certain crustaceans; or the members of the body may drop away, as in those sea creatures who settle down on the back of a crab and are converted into a mere absorbent sac. Notwithstanding these excisions and deteriorations, however, life survives and its wonderful march continues. Species may follow species in the endless panorama of existence, but the course of evolution is not frustrated, and it often so uses the retrogression as to introduce a new variety and higher type of life.

Christianity is also endued with a persistent conservatism. She has been impaired by evil environment, she has at times become dim of vision; she has occasionally sacrificed her independent activities and has degenerated into an ecclesiastical absorbent sac on the back of some non-progressive worldly government, and she has developed a great variety of species of herself—but she herself survives. She will not die and apparently cannot be killed. In the degradation of her Churchism she evolved the larger and nobler Congregationalism and Puritanism of the seventeenth century; and when even Puritanism had declined and had become an arid waste of dogmatism and stilted asceticism she unfolded herself in the new Methodism of Wesley and in the spiritual movements of the Haldanes. She has always proved herself equal to the changed conditions. For a season she may have seemed to be overmatched;

but after a while she has reasserted herself and put forth fresh energy and presented another variety of her exhaustless life. Like the seed, in one form she has wasted away only to recover herself in another; and reflecting on the unfailing working of this law I do not see why we should be despondent in this hour of crisis, or imagine that Christianity is perishing when she may only be passing through a new transition.

This conviction will, I think, be deepened by the confirmation which our Lord's doctrine of the seed receives from history. Thus, the Hebrews had to descend into captivity before they could attain the rank of freemen. They had to be planted in the soil of Egypt and there learn in bondage the glory of freedom, before they could take their stand with the nations. There they acquired the habits of obedience, acquired the arts and sciences and were trained for the inevitable hardships they had to endure. Their servitude in Babylon was also not in vain, for after the exile these Israelites exhibit a purer monotheism and a deeper spirituality. Later on, Paul argues that their final dispersion means "the riches of the world." Hitherto, their privileges had been local and racial, but with the death of their nationality, their Scriptures, their spiritual ideals, their very hopes became the common possession of mankind.

Similarly Greece passes away. We are yet thrilled by her story and follow breathlessly her varied fortunes. But the splendor of Athens, the glory of her schools, her navies and her armies—these have been long ago swallowed up in the darkening tomb of time:

> "Far-called, the navies melt away;
> On dune and headland sinks the fire;
> Lo, all the pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre."

Nevertheless, the Hellenistic spirit lives on. When Thucydides wrote his immortal history it was bounded, parochial, restricted to the heroic people of his day, but since then it has been emancipated. It permeates our literature, it pervades our culture, and preserves before the eyes of each generation the loftiest examples of patriotism. The seed died that it might live again in the larger life of the ages.

Thus, also, in the colonies of North America, the seed of liberty as contained in *Magna Charta*, through the singular fatuities of the British government was trampled into the mire and seemed to perish, but it did not. The outer envelop of the seed rotted and fell away, the inner life survived, and when it triumphed over death an advance was attained; for kings and thrones, state, churches and other appendages of royalty and encumbrances of freedom had ceased to be longer tolerable. There was again a time nearer to our own when this precious treasure appeared to be in jeopardy. Secession had plunged the United States in civil war and evil prophets abroad and pessimists at home had predicted the collapse of free institutions. Liberty was doubtless being sifted and tried in the fires. But she did not succumb. She emerged from the flame, purer, grander, to exert a wider influence on mankind than ever in the past.

When we remember the bitter vicissitudes through which this same liberty has passed, and recall the seasons, long and dark, in which she has been buried out of sight by despotic men, we can hardly doubt the immortality of her life. She has been crushed repeatedly. She has been gagged, bound, and stoned in the streets. Tyrants, persecutors and inquisitors have drunk themselves merry as they have jeered at her corpse, and the poor have wrung their hands in despairing sorrow as she responded not to

their piteous cries. The world thrust the dead aside and went on building up monarchies, fostering oligarchies and playing with imperialisms. And yet, notwithstanding the haughty contempt of her enemies, and the faintheartedness of her friends, liberty has revived, resumed again her mission, and in a way broader, grander, and truer, has gone forth to emancipate and ennoble mankind.

What, liberty immortal and Christianity perishable? Why, when the latter is called on to endure what the former has encountered and survived, should we straightway conclude that her mission is drawing to a close? We have here an instructive parallel. Has Christianity entered on a time when her supporters are falling away? So have they often fallen away from liberty. Is she no longer a commanding force? There have been seasons when liberty has failed to enthrone and sway the masses. Has she impaired her influence by too close intimacy with the world? Alas! liberty also has frequently corrupted her way, and may be doing so now, by her alliance with extravagance, luxury and sordidness. Has Christianity reached a point when she doubts herself and when she is perplexed and confused at her own misgivings? Well, her experiences have been duplicated more than once by liberty, and yet liberty survives and no reasonable man denies that to her belongs the future. Shall we have more confidence in the indestructibility of liberty than of Christianity? I, for one, cannot. Is she who has given to so many the purer and nobler life to perish? For her to cease, to pass away, would be as anomalous and absurd as it would have been for Christ to raise Lazarus from the dead while He Himself had to remain helpless in the tomb. No, like liberty, she may be overshadowed, and for the moment almost buried out of sight, but like liberty, she is endued with endless life.

Therefore, we ought to dismiss all serious apprehension and alarm, and determine in what way we can best further the divine purpose that death may indeed contribute to the larger life, and decay to the fuller growth.

Primarily, our duty is one of direction. When I say this I am not unmindful of the fact that Paul may plant and Apollos water, and that God must give the increase. I am not ignoring the divine power. That is reverently acknowledged and trusted. His intelligence, however, is operative through ours, and by us He molds, shapes and orders the religion that is proclaimed in His name. The question has been raised by evolutionists whether nature shows direction towards a definite end, or "has the created world rightly been compared to a ship which has been abandoned as a derelict upon the high seas, in itself evidently fitted up and ordered for some good voyage, yet left without helmsman to drift as an aimless world over the deeps of infinite space?"[1] This last supposition is being abandoned by scientists and it is coming to be more generally believed that the phrase "natural selection" is misleading—for how can there be *selection*, choice, separating, arrangement, without intelligence? This being perceived, there is a growing conviction that nature has been and is being guided by a Supreme Mind to a specific end. It is to be noted also that in moving towards this end the Almighty has engaged the thoughtful cooperation of the creature, as seen in the cultivation of plants, the improvement of soils, the domestication of animals, the development of flowers and in the wonderful transformations that have taken place in the physical order. Nor is it credible to suppose that God would have imparted a definite character to nature, and would have intimated its goal, would have associated human beings with Himself in its destiny, and not have

[1] "Through Science to Faith," p. 80. Smyth.

pursued the same course in regard to the fashioning and forwarding of Christianity.

There is an instructive passage in the letter to the Corinthians (*1 Epistle 15 : 37, 38*) that bears upon this point. Writing of the resurrection St. Paul says: "that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own." Yes; "a body of its own," not foreign to it, contradictory of it, but as identical with it essentially and as harmonious as the shock of ripened corn to the germs from whence it sprang. Thus, likewise, we nothing doubt that he purposes in the requickening of Christianity that her latest and highest form shall never depart from the fundamental type imparted to her originally.

"A body of her own"—this is our rule of conduct. Under God we are to direct the revived life and new growth, not by diverging from the genius and nature of Christianity, but by conforming to them and unfolding them to their utmost limit of spiritual fullness and beauty. In other words, we are to be careful, not in the name of progress to array her in the cast-off garments of defunct Paganism, or to invest her with the emblems of departed Stoicism, or even to dress her up in the new-fangled notions of a modern religion, not sure of God, uncertain of future blessedness, and destitute of mediation and atonement.

Charles Sumner in one of his speeches describes the action of the swollen river Arve in driving back the onflowing Rhone into the Lake of Geneva. The one river arrests the progress of the other, but after the unnatural reaction, the Rhone resumes its way with greater volume and force, with waters clearer for having been submerged

in the lake and having there been sunned and purified. But however increased in volume, however nobler in expanse and however swifter and more impetuous in movement, the waters were still water, no radical change having taken place in their composition. Thus, likewise, with Christianity. For a time she may have been arrested in her course, and the deluging torrents of worldliness and recklessness may have temporarily driven her back. Ah! if we would do our duty, let us direct her refluent flow to the source from whence she came, and there in her earliest, simplest and purest state she may wash herself clean of her defilements and return to her work purer and mightier—the same in character as when she first streamed forth to bless.

Secondly, our duty is one of cultivation. St. Paul reminds us that we are God's husbandry; at once we are His garden and His helpers. So the same writer recognizes the obligation we are under to plant and to water the seed. That God gives the increase is not questioned. It is affirmed. But that does not supersede the necessity for our doing what we are appointed to do. We are to do our best so to condition religion that it will have a favorable opportunity to progress. What is planting if it is not wisely conditioning the seed? The best soil is chosen, the space most open to the sun and most exposed to refreshing showers. If we would have a harvest we must be dissatisfied with the grain as it is and take pains so as to condition it that it may yield its abundance. We must answer the question for ourselves:—Are we content with Christianity? Is she what she ought to be, what she might be? For myself, I answer, "No."

I look at her as I would at a seed, and I discover an outer envelop of tradition, false or inadequate theologies, antiquated schemes of work, conventional and depressing

modes of worship combined with narrowing prejudices and bigoted trivial asceticisms; and not until she is afforded adequate opportunity to free herself from this chaff will she grow in grace, beauty and fruitfulness. Are we ready to furnish this opportunity? If so, we will encourage free inquiry, an independent spirit and revolutionary reforms. We will not cling to customs and creeds as though they were of divine authority, and resent and reject the widening and expanding influence of scientific and critical knowledge on faith. Moreover, we will more than ever take it out of its ecclesiastical associations and transplant it to the homes and common life of the people. The ecclesiastical hot-house is not the best place for its development. There it attains only a stunted, fruitless and odorless growth. Carry it to the lowly abodes of the masses, to the broad, open plains of the world's ordinary life, and it will have to put away from it the superficial, decaying chaff or perish. The struggling common people have no heart or time for the discussions and hair-splitting distinctions of the clergy,—and planted in their midst, left to them, and tested by their necessities, Christianity would soon lose some of these encumbrances which disfigure her progress.

Then, finally, our duty is one of exemplification. We should illustrate in ourselves what we aim to see wrought out on a larger scale by the entire Church. I have already stated that the principle in the text is applicable to ourselves as individuals. This is confirmed by what follows it, when Jesus adds: "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal." Rev. Dr. Marcus Dods has a very suggestive comment on this passage: "One of two things you can do with your life. . . . You may consume your life for your own present gratification and profit, to satisfy your

present cravings and tastes and to secure the largest amount of immediate enjoyment to yourself—you may eat your life; or you may be content to put aside present enjoyment and profits of a selfish kind and devote your life to the uses of God and man."[1] You can either feed on the seed you hold or plant it. If you do the former you have your little pleasure and then it is forever gone, but if you plant it, you have surrendered it to obscurity and to the possibilities of the future. This is the hard thing to do—to walk by faith not by sight. To believe that by surrendering to-day, by giving up our large and commanding pulpit for an obscurer one, by turning our back now on home and friends for distant fields of labor, or by sacrificing the present enjoyment of wealth, ease and comfort, we shall make our to-morrow fuller, richer and more abundant, is not an easy achievement. Most of us stagger and falter there.

And yet what we are anxious to see in Christianity as a whole will never be unless it is first actualized in its individual members. When Christians are ready to deny themselves really and not fictitiously, when they are glad to serve that higher interests may prosper, then we may cease from troubling over the future of our faith. The beliefs, the spirit and the actions of the units will determine the course and destiny of the aggregates. Let them feel in measurable degree that not until they are planted in lowliness and die to their pride, self-seeking and self-gratification can they bear much fruit, then Christianity will be sympathetic with them and will convert her retrogression into a condition of advancement.

May I not add that this acting on the principle which our Lord recognized as governing His own increase of power brings with it a peculiar reward of its own. It prepares us for the last great change, called death. By it we

[1] "Gospel of John," Vol. II, p. 35.

are educated in the art of dying, and the grave is despoiled of its gloom. St. Paul declared that he "died daily," and when we likewise mortify the deeds of the body, or "do to death," as it has been rendered, our lower self that the higher self may live, we become reconciled to the inevitable dissolution that awaits us. We understand it, and if we do not welcome it, we shrink not from it.

The law of progress here teaches us that we die in time that we may live in eternity, that were we never planted in the grave we would never bear fruit in immortality. Taught by our experiences we find it impossible to think of death as an ending. It is not the extinction of being, but the flickering of the flame preceding an inextinguishable enkindling; it is not an eternal winter, around whose icy brow gleam auroral mocking smiles, but a momentary chill that leads to beauteous summer; and it is not an eternal sleep, sheeted in earth and mantled with sod, but a gentle closing of the weary eyelids and a folding of the tired hands before the dawning of the day that brings neither weariness nor care. Such, then, is death; this and nothing more. And if it is only this, let us not be dismayed at its approach, but welcome it as the cold, though altogether kindly friend who strips us of the tinsel finery of earth and clothes us with the spotless regal robes of heaven.

In Scotland there is a famous picture, described to me recently by a friend, that represents a dying maiden, overshadowed by a skeleton, the symbol of death. Back of the repulsive figure is seen the shadowy form of a radiant angel, and behind the fleshless hand of the destroyer, as though it were its own, another hand, fair with angelic beauty, laid upon the heart of the poor young sufferer. The artist's meaning is transparent. Judged by the eye of sense, death is horrible, but the eye of faith discerns only a glorious being come to bear the emancipated spirit home

to bliss. The skeleton disappears in the seraph, and the iciness of its touch thrills the dying with the fires of immortality! Shall we not then kiss the chilly fingers and smile at the hideous, ghastly mask our good angel is pleased to wear?

Taking into consideration the very general operation of the law of decay and growth, and the reasonableness of the obligations resting on God's people, we feel warranted in believing that, notwithstanding all unfavorable signs, Christianity has only been checked, impeded, for a season, and will recover herself and sweep on with greater majesty to victory.

There was a brief time when the floods of Niagara ceased to roll over the brink into the abyss below. From the shore to Goat's Island there was scarcely any water, and it was said that a man could have walked almost dryshod from one point to the other. But what a fool he would have been had he concluded that he might pitch his tent there in the forsaken channel, on the assumption that the floods would nevermore sweep onward from Lake Erie. Had he perpetrated such a piece of consummate madness he would not have long escaped its terrible consequences, for the waters had not been evaporated or swallowed up. They had merely been obstructed by an ice jam and were fretting against their frozen barriers. After a time they swept over the hindrance to their freedom, or bursting through it surged forward to the edge of the precipice, and had any poor creature been in their path he would have been swirled over into the weltering maelstrom below.

Christianity, likewise, seems to be temporarily the victim of chill and frost. Her way has been blocked. She has been driven back, or she has been prevented by various hindrances from moving forward. Let not her friends, however, despair, or her foes rejoice. If there is any truth

in these great spiritual laws we have studied, if we have to decline that we may ascend, die that we may live, if God is back of His cause, then Christianity shall surely regain more than her usual momentum, shall drive all foes before her, and fill the earth with her glory, as the mighty falls of Niagara fill Ontario with their clear and glorious floods.

III

THE RELIGIOUS PROBLEM OF THE CITY

"And when even was come He [Jesus] went out of the city."—*Mark 11 : 19.*

WE sometimes lightly hold and frivolously abandon what we have received with every expression of delight. The flowers we pluck with feverish hands are often cast aside before they wither, and the fairest loves are sometimes forsaken before they have yielded half their sweetness, for new and strange affections. Men, alas, are too uncertain in their friendships and too mercurial in their tempers for us always to rely on their vows or to be sure that their gratification of to-day will survive on the morrow.

Our Lord on His triumphal entry into Jerusalem mistrusted both. He perceived, however sincere the people may have been, that their violent transports would soon exhaust themselves and that they would in a moment weary of what their sires had for centuries been longing to possess. Quick was He to detect in their hallelujahs the inevitable strident anathemas, and hence notwithstanding His welcome He could not feel at home in the metropolis of Judea. St. Luke notices that during the week beginning with Palm Sunday Jesus does not stay in Jerusalem at night. With the return of evening He goes forth to Bethany or the Mount of Olives, until the crisis is reached and then He goes forth for the last time bearing His cross. Never more shall He teach in the streets of the city, never

more shall He heal in its public places, and never more weep over the doom of its people, except from the heights of heaven.

The world has never yet been blessed with a real and actual Christian city, with one where our Lord has dwelt and reigned. It is not denied that many communities have been thus regarded, and that not a few have inscribed a religious sentiment on their coat of arms. Nor is it forgotten that one municipality has been crowded with churches and governed largely by ecclesiastics. But I maintain that at the best they have been only partially Christianized and never have been thoroughly permeated and controlled by the spirit of Christ. Surely the so-called converted Rome of the fourth century, on to its overthrow in the fifth, as described by Ammianus Marcellinus and St. Jerome,—with its rich patricians arrayed in tunics and mantles of fluttering silk, riding in gold-plated chariots, eating and drinking to satiety, and their wives, disciples of the Nazarene, decorated and painted, wearing robes of silken stuff gorgeously embroidered with representations of the poverty of Jesus—could hardly be truly termed a Christian city. Still less does it seem entitled to that honor when our eyes rest on the priest with his jewelled fingers and lordly ways sneering at a poor German monk, who, standing on the banks of the yellow Tiber, is moved to indignation at the gross superstitions and grosser immoralities of the times. It was not a Christian city then, notwithstanding its popes, bishops, cardinals and reverend clergy, any more than Constantinople was in the days of Chrysostom, or Carthage in the days of Augustine, and it has never been a Christian city since.

Verona, Nuremburg, Florence in the middle-ages, glorious in art and gorgeous in cathedral worship, with

their narrow, fetid, gloomy streets, and with their unsanitary and crowded houses, were never really entitled to be regarded as other than semi-barbarous and semi-heathenish communities. Spiritually and morally we fear that not much more can be claimed for Paris, Berlin, London, Chicago, New York and other modern commercial and industrial centres. Admitting their gracious charities, their numberless churches, their numerous and splendid educational foundations, their many noble and elevating measures of reform, and their cultured, worthy, upright citizens, not a few, nevertheless they are far from approximating to the Christian ideal. It is not necessary to insinuate or charge that Jesus has no welcome in such cities, or that He has abandoned them altogether. He may be there, as I believe He is, and yet not having been accepted by the large majority of the population and His principles not being acted on in civic government, it must be conceded, however reluctantly, that they have no right to be called by His name.

The low moral tone, the sordid and mercenary features of our material civilizations and the frequency of municipal scandals, taken in connection with the neglected churches, the desecrated Sabbaths, and the apparent decline of vital faith, force on the attention of all thoughtful people, what I desire to consider:

The Religious Problem of the City

What is this problem? We ought to ascertain its character.

A clergyman has recently asserted, "the Church wanes but Christianity increases,"—a belated paradox, truly. Accepted as it reads, it would justify the corollary:—Efface the Church altogether and Christianity would triumph all along the line. But would it? Are we pre-

pared to subscribe to a corresponding statement—less root, more flower; no root, all flower; less government, better citizenship; no government—anarchy—good and perfect citizenship? Yet these formulas are just as reasonable as to maintain that the abrogation of pulpits, altars, public services and all that enter into church life and order would and does contribute to the growth of the Christian faith. Fewer springs, more and fuller rivers,—is a statement that fails to commend itself to common sense, and as the church wanes Christianity increases is equally unconvincing. No; such a contradiction is not tenable. The two seem rather to stand or fall together. Hence, John Morley has not hesitated to say: "Christianity has been tried and failed; to-day that failure is too patent." The author of "Natural Religion" has added: "When a religion, such as Christianity loses its hold after having possessed the minds of men for centuries, as a matter of course a sort of phantom of it will haunt the earth for a time." So, then, all we have is merely a ghost! Rev. Dr. Watson has deepened this suspicion by what he has been writing of late about "The New Revival":

"The attendance on public worship is steadily decreasing, the grasp of spiritual realities is consciously relaxing, the enthusiasm for Christ's Cross is fading, and the light of hope and triumph is dying from the brow of faith. We are between the tides, between the creed which is dead and the creed which is to be, between the life that was and the life that is going to be; we are in the gray mist between night and morning."

From these representations, whether accepted in their entirety or not, we are warranted in inferring that the trouble lies not with the Church alone, but with Christianity as well, and that the latter does not gain in influence when the former declines in strength and in support. This

interdependence brings into relief two features of the religious problem:

I. Church Attendance. II. Christian Efficiency.

It will probably be admitted without argument that if we are to do the people good we must bring them together, and that if they decline to come we are just so far prevented from carrying out our benevolent intentions. I am not saying that church attendance is everything, nor the supreme thing; only that it furnishes a guage of the city's spiritual life. Now, it is generally conceded that there has been a serious falling off in congregations during the last few years, and that there is a widespread indifference to the claims of divine worship. A few figures on the subject may serve a useful purpose.

In greater New York out of a population of three and one-half millions it is estimated that over two millions of people have no interest in any form of religion,—Catholic, Protestant, Hebrew, or any other. It is also asserted that within the same city limits there are upwards of 636,000 out-of-church Protestants, and statistics have shown that all over the area not more than twenty-one per cent. enter the house of God on Sunday. Other American cities may make a better showing, but in nearly all the falling away is distinctly manifest. Nor is it more encouraging on the other side of the Atlantic. Liverpool, with a population of 700,000, and with accommodations for 200,000 worshippers, on a clear Sunday had only 100,000 people in its sanctuaries. Dr. Aked, referring to these significant statistics said in a sermon: "There is not a Protestant denomination which has not gone back in the course of eleven years' work," and last summer the Roman Catholics of Liverpool were greatly exercised on discovering that the attendance on their ministrations had declined thirty per cent.

The most interesting and the most scientific inquiry into this subject was undertaken by the *Daily News* in connection with the religious life of London, and with reliable, though pathetic and depressing, results. According to the *Daily News'* estimate only 850,205 persons out of a population of 4,468,049, and a possible attendance of 2,234,000 are to be set down as church goers in the great metropolis. About sixteen per cent., a meagre proportion, is about all that can be said to take any interest in the Christianity of London, and it is clear that neither the Establishment nor Nonconformity is maintaining its ground. During sixteen years the number of Anglican worshippers has diminished from 535,715 to 396,627, a loss of nearly 140,000, but comparatively the Dissenters have gained, so that now the strength of the two communions, judged by the census of church attendance, is about equal. The following statement from the pen of Mr. R. Mudi-Smith, the Superintendent of the Census, is worthy of consideration:

"Our investigations as to the proportion who attend a place of worship twice on a Sunday extended over a considerable period, and included a large number of places of worship. As a result of those investigations, we discovered that thirty-five per cent., or roughly one-third, of those attending church are 'Twicers.' Curiously enough, this is the exact proportion I estimated and gave in *The Daily News* several months ago. This fact affects the totals very materially. The grand total is at once reduced from 1,002,940 to 850,205; and the aggregate attendance for the whole of London, instead of being one in 4.45, or twenty per cent. of the population, becomes one in 5.25, or sixteen per cent. of the population. I estimate that fifty per cent. of the population can if they wish attend a place of worship on Sunday; supposing this to be the case, 2,268,270 persons might have been present at social

worship, whereas, as I have already shown, only 850,205 were present, 1,418,065 having willfully absented themselves from worship. In other words, sixty per cent. of the available population is apparently either apathetic or antagonistic as regards attendance at a place of worship on a Sunday."

There has been an impression abroad that this sixty per cent. is composed almost exclusively of the Bohemian and impoverished classes of the metropolis. The investigations, however, have dispelled this illusion. In proportion to their numbers it has been found that as many wealthy, titled and cultured people neglect the Lord's house as there are poor, ignorant and vicious who do so. A writer in the *Manchester Guardian* thus relieves his mind on this point:

"The leaders of fashion, as far as I can observe, do not go to church at all. Either they 'think it all so silly,' as the wife of a statesman said to the Archbishop of Canterbury about the service in chapel which precedes dinner at Lambeth Palace, or they are too much fatigued by the social labors of the preceding week, or they want to look through their housekeeping-books or their betting-books, or they can't spare the time from bridge. It is currently said that some very great ladies, wishing to combine their own freedom with a proper example to the lower orders, always carry Prayer-books when they walk in the park before luncheon on Sunday. It looks well and it imposes no burden."

I think it important that this disregard of religious obligations on the part of the well-to-do and the aristocratic should be recognized. Its parallel exists on the Continent of Europe and in America. We talk much about the lower classes, the workmen, the artisans, and the denizens of the slums, and mourn that they are so indifferent to the

claims of the sanctuary, and we compare views as to how we can reach these erring people. Somehow we take for granted that the millionaires and the gentry, small and great, are thronging the courts of the Lord, and that we have no cause of anxiety as far as they are concerned. And yet they are as unmindful of their duty as others. Nay, more, the neglect of the church by the indigent and ignorant is largely explained by the irreligiousness of those whose position in life is comfortable and prosperous, and who have no good reason for the slight they put on the holy offices of our common faith.

There is another side to this problem. Church going is not everything. There have been cities where nearly the entire population gathered each week for praise and prayer, and yet apparently were not much better for their devotion. When such observances are substituted for religion itself it is not difficult to account for their failure to improve the character. In such cases the worshipper makes the means the end, and hence never attains the end itself. The real problem is, having prevailed on the people to attend church, how to quicken the conscience and fill the soul with love to God and man. It is possible to gather ten to sixteen thousand people to a service, as Dr. Dowie did in New York, but when they are collected, what then? As reported at a meeting of the "Federation of Churches" in New York, a clergyman said that it is now impossible to reach people by the preaching of the Word,—for we do not live up to it—and we must, therefore, do so by Industrial Palaces and similar agencies.

But the question rises: Do we *reach* them then? I am not questioning the value of such institutions, but, if we are able to bring crowds together for temporal benefits in the name of religion, have we in any just sense reached them? What do we mean by reaching the masses? The

phrase is often used but rarely analyzed. If it has any worthy significance it must denote the elevation of the spiritual nature, the quickening of morality, the deepening of devotion; or, to use Scripture language, the regeneration of the soul and the consecration of the life to the noblest ideals. Hence, while the religious problem comprehends church attendance it does not stop there; for it includes the far more serious question of effective dealing with the people when they do attend. When a congregation is built up what difference does it make, what difference to the throngs, what difference to society at large?

With quite a number of thinkers "reaching the masses" by the church, resolves itself primarily into the obligation to relieve their temporal necessities and provide them with more favorable surroundings. Her social mission is uppermost in many minds when they are condemning her failures. It is unquestionably true that she will exert very little influence, morally and spiritually, over the neglected millions of the world if she fails deliberately in helpful sympathy. Nor can she be fairly charged with such neglect, at least in recent times. Mr. Charles Booth in his magnificent volumes, on "Life and Labor in London," has furnished facts and figures regarding her bounty and benevolence in the metropolis which exonerates her from the aspersions of critics. She is doing a vast amount of work and giving a vast amount of money to succor the wretched and the fallen, and in New York, Philadelphia, Paris and elsewhere is doing quite as much as in London. It is confessed, however, all around that the moral and religious results of her sacrifices are very far from being encouraging.

It must be remembered that the forces making for social degradation are practically beyond her ability to control. When she points out specifically a source of pollution and

debasement, she is usually told to mind her own business and preach the gospel. She has no authority to coerce the pauper-making and vice-breeding agencies which flourish under the protection of law. Let us treat her fairly. The church has not sufficient money at her disposal to counteract the deteriorating effects of unscientific economic principles, which keep thousands in a state of poverty and semi-starvation; neither is she rich enough to furnish the indigent and debased with the leisure and wholesome recreations which they need.

In both these respects she should do what she could, and undoubtedly she could do more than she is doing. But if she is to be really helpful in social reform she must be careful not to obscure the ground of her action. If she permits the impression to obtain that she is bound to make up in charity what the industrial system is bound to pay in justice, the injustice will grow beyond the ability of charity to mitigate by its gifts—and the blame for the resulting degradation and misery will be laid at the door of the church. Already a vague impression of this kind seems to be abroad. Never has the church before given as much money to correct social ills, and yet never have so many of her beneficiaries refused to attend her services, and never before has there been so wide-spread a disposition to hold her responsible for evils she has not created, and which she has been striving to ameliorate. Up to the present two things must be admitted:

I. The recent humanitarianism of the church has not increased her membership, nor increased attendance on her public ministrations.

II. Neither has it brought any perceptible change in the social conditions which are ruinous to the moral well-being and happiness of thousands.

The problem of religion is, how all this can be remedied,

how the inhabitants of our cities without regard to race or rank can generally be induced to attend on its ministrations and how its legitimate power over individual and social life can be revived.

Nor will it be possible to deal successfully with this problem until we recognize and study three forces by which it is complicated.

The first of these forces is the saloon. Cardinal Manning gives as the result of thirty-five years of observation: "The chief bar to the working of the Holy Spirit in the souls of men is intoxicating drink;" a view shared by the late Dean Farrar, who saw in the growing power of the public house a peril not only to the church but to the nation.

Our national drink bill for 1902 was $1,454,090,000. No wonder that the Mayor of Stamford was silent when some ladies visited him on behalf of closed saloons on Sunday and inquired: "whether he thought the liquor influence in America was greater than the Christian influence?" Probably he thought only one answer could be given; especially when it is remembered that teaching and preaching in the United States cost only $170,000,000, of which the clergymen's support rules at about $25,000,000. Add to these figures, if you will, for possible mistakes $30,000,000, and then you have in sharp contrast $1,454,090,000 for the demoralization and impoverishment of our nation as against only $200,000,000 for its recovery and elevation. What think you? Is the Christian influence stronger than the liquor influence?

Now, view the hold that the traffic has on cities. It has been stated by a careful statistician that in Liverpool one person in thirty is arrested annually for drunkenness; in Manchester one in thirty-eight; Dublin one in twenty-four. Concerning the latter city it has been said that if all the

public houses were joined together in a row, allowing seven feet width to each place, we would have a street five miles long—and then we affect to wonder at the poverty of Ireland. Let us come nearer home, and study the question from the standpoint of the number of saloons to the population and the influence of high license. In New York, where, until the new schedule went into operation, the tax was $800 (maximum) we have had one saloon to every 317 persons. Philadelphia at a license of $1,100 has one to 744 persons. In Boston, where license is from $500 to $2,000, there is a saloon to every 572 persons; but in Baltimore the tax is $250 and a saloon is supplied to every 243 souls. Chicago $500, one saloon to 253.

In New York last year—1902—there were 183,749 arrests for all causes, of which 71,573 were for drunkenness; in Boston 34,500, of which 19,511 were for inebriation. These figures afford much food for reflection. Particularly it is to be remembered that the saloon interests are compactly organized in cities as elsewhere. They are so strong that in one Connecticut town the chief magistrate asserts that public opinion would not sustain him in closing the saloon on Sunday in accordance with the law given and provided. In New York the remarks of Mayor Low in relation to the Liquor Dealers' Association gave rise to the suspicion that that organization had raised a large corruption fund—a charge of which its members ought to have purged themselves instead of indulging in threats, as they did, for threats are, like suicide, tantamount to confession.

This combination is practically and solidly arrayed against the churches. Its influence is unfavorable to thrift, sanity, morality and religion. It benumbs the conscience, stupefies the reason, deadens the sensibilities and paralyzes the energy. It fills cities with idlers and lawbreakers, with tattered, neglected children, with brutal

homes and disorderly houses. This united and deadly enemy of all good has intrenched itself in the great political parties, bribes municipalities, through the luring scheme of license, corrupts the police, intimidates candidates for office, and is even unwilling to give the church one clear day in seven to attempt the task of counteracting the ravages of strong drink. In London the saloon has its doors wide open part of the day on Sunday, and the result is seen in the ever-deepening poverty and despair of the great city. It is now urged that in the United States we should follow the example set by the older country. God forbid that we should do so. Could London retrace her steps and close the public house on the Lord's Day she would do so. Let not America court fresh woes and disasters by yielding a single point to the rum power. She owes something to Christianity, and it is not too much to ask that she preserve one day from the demoralization of the open saloon, that a reasonably favorable opportunity be granted for the reclamation of the fallen and the fortifying of the weak against temptation.

The second of the forces that complicates our problem is the Stage. I have no desire in an undiscriminating way to assail the theatre. That it is open to criticism, and to that of the gravest kind, cannot be denied. Not a few of its ardent supporters have conceded that in several respects its character is objectionable. M. Dumas, himself a dramatist, wrote to an acquaintance: "You do not take your daughter to see my play. You are right. Let me say once for all you must not take your daughter to the theatre. It is not mainly the work that is immoral, it is the place." And this saying recalls a pregnant fact. In this country and in Europe endeavors have been made to reform and elevate the stage, and never one has been a permanent success. Like Mr. Booth's attempt in New

York years ago the public by its indifference has indicated clearly that it is not particularly anxious for a theatre where realistic art is subordinated to idealistic morals. Mr. Clement Scott, the foremost dramatic critic connected with the English press, confirms this impression when discussing the question of women and the player's calling. He says:

"A woman may take a header into a whirlpool and be miraculously saved; but then she may be drowned. I should be sorry to expose modesty to the shock of that worst kind of temptation, a frivolous disregard of womanly purity. One out of a hundred may be safe; but then she must hear things that she had better not listen to and witness things she had better not see. Stage life, according to my experience, has a tendency to disorder the finer feelings, to crush the inner nature of men and women out, and to substitute artificiality and hollowness for sincerity and truth; and, mind you, I speak from an intimate experience of the stage extending over thirty-seven years. It is nearly impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession. Everything is against her, and what is more to be deplored is that a woman who endeavors to keep her purity is almost of necessity doomed to failure in her career. It is an awful thing to say, and it is still more terrible that it is true, but none who know the life of the green-room will deny it."

These animadversions are not dictated by the Puritan spirit and by the enemies of amusements, but they are freely uttered by those who are most closely related to the theatrical profession, and who have every reason to be its defenders. Professors of religion may well ask themselves whether in view of these damaging representations they can with consistency give their support to an institution whose total influence is so pernicious, and whether Chris-

tianity can ever regain its ascendency in a city where it is alleged church members are as frequently found in a play-house as in a prayer-meeting.

We do not deny that the stage has come to exercise enormous power over the social and moral life of our cities. Indeed, one enthusiast credits it with greater influence than is now exerted by the church. I do not believe it. But if it is true, it is doubtless largely due to the patronage it has received during later years from church members; and it is for them to determine whether it is to their honor that they should for the sake of a little gratification have subjected their faith to this humiliation. This claim of superior prominence and weight in the affairs of society ought to arouse Christian people to a sense of their responsibility. If it is true that the stage is such a ruling force as is claimed, and if the church declines as it advances, then the world is nearer to a moral collapse than ever pessimists have imagined, and the disciples of our Lord are nearer to the universal execration of posterity for bartering away the noblest heritage of humanity for a mess of pottage than they have ever dreamed.

Though I am not prepared to yield to this assertion of transcendent power, I am not oblivious to the large place occupied by the theatre in the life of our great cities; neither am I disposed to affirm that it was never a source of wholesome delight. It may debase the taste and unfit for the practical duties of the working world; still it does entertain and may be capable of better things. I am not hopeful, neither am I dogmatically sure of its final unregeneracy. We have, however, to deal with it as it is, and as it is, unquestionably it does not make for Christian enthusiasm and activity. Manifestly, the less desirable places of amusement unfit their audiences for church

attendance, and several of them do their best, by furnishing Sunday entertainments, to keep them from the sanctuary. In not a few theatres of the better class the sensational scenes, the excitement and the length of the performance leave very little strength for labor on the week day, or for worship on the Sabbath. The jaded patrons after the intoxicating splendors of the drama crave sleep and recuperation rather than business or devotion.

The influence of the theatre complicates the religious problem because it creates in the community a feeling that amusement is the serious end of life. In pleading for an American National Theatre a gentleman recently urged that it was desirable as a school, for in the theatre the scholar learns without the necessity of application, and is taught while being diverted. We are not intellectually quickened in any such way, and the effect of plays on the average theatre patron does not bear out the contention. The habitués of the theatre are not the most brilliant specimens of mankind, and a lad subject to a course of instruction from the stage would more likely turn out to be in the end a loafer and aimless idler, or a roué and shiftless scamp, than an acute lawyer, bank president, or captain of industry. Hard headed men of the world understand this; they send their boys to school and college, and have no confidence in the educational pretenses of the stage. These they laugh at and the community as a whole may be trusted not to be befooled by them.

But in religion the people are not generally as clear-sighted and as far-sighted as they are in their worldly interests. This passion for amusement and the very serious place it occupies in the modern world, seems to have begotten in large circles a craving for something

bordering on diversion in church services and in public worship. The spectacular and the showy in ceremonial, and, more immeasurably to be deplored, the grotesque, eccentric and pretentious in preaching and preachers, have peculiar fascinations for unthinking crowds. They are easily caught by the glare, the pomp and other theatricalities of a self-announced prophet, and though they may mock at his delusions, as they are entertained they throng his way. It is not easy to speak unobjectionably on this point. We have no desire to countenance dullness or dreariness in religious services, but it is vital to the cause that the people be not encouraged to expect in the church diversion, instead of instruction and spiritual inspiration.

Christianity is not a fiction, it is not a drama, and its business is not to share with innumerable shows the art of amusing. Its mission is sublime and preeminently spiritual. It is God's message to fallen man. Its object is to bring man back from the fairy realms in which he has been wandering that he may touch reality and be real. In modern life we are all too frequently the victims of artificiality. We deceive ourselves, and we are in danger of becoming mere painted things like our surroundings. Christianity disillusionizes us. It strips us of our finery, decorations and play-acting ways, and forces us to be serious, true and thorough. But when we look to its offices for *not this*, but for a continuance in another form of what we find in the theatre, we lose the real blessing of religion; and as the church cannot rival the stage in sensational effect, so she can never hope to hold her own by an attempt to imitate its arts.

The third of the forces antagonistic to religion is the slum. Mr. Charles Booth has shown that 30.7 per cent. of the population of London live in poverty, poverty meaning "a life in which there is no margin," and that physical

and moral deterioration inevitably follow—deterioration that pollutes the blood, relaxes the energies, dulls the sensibilities and breeds viciousness, laziness and crime. When this downward trend has reached its lowest stage and when various types of degenerates have been multiplied the slum is evolved—that deepest depth of social degradation and infamy, "the fœtid lair," as Mr. W. T. Stead has called it, "of the Savage of Civilization." It is not surprising that the entire district known as the East End of London should be sadly broken up and gloomily diversified by these plague spots; for there the laborer is notoriously underpaid, there the sweater grows rich on his trade, and there the seedy and impecunious alien is astutely brought by the employer into competition with the native born. It is now coming to be realized that not until the stream of immigration from the continent is checked will it be possible to clean up the filthy stews of the great metropolis, though this of itself will not suffice wholly to eradicate the evil. Other cities are similarly cursed with these wretched neighborhoods,—Paris, Glasgow, Chicago, New York—overcrowded, drink-sodden and thieving centres, where practically the same specimens of neglected, shoeless, hatless, half-naked children, of coarse, brutal and murderous men, and of shrunken, cursing creatures of both sexes, crowd the street, hang about the doors of dram shops and make night hideous by brawls and blows.

New York has been particularly conspicuous for the foulness of her slums. Through the lower East Side and in two or three districts on the West the desperate and degraded herd together in appalling numbers, and the despairing and the outcast intermingle with the underpaid, underfed workers, men and women, who toil, sleep, sicken and die in the same miserable and dilapidated room. On Manhattan Island there are 200,000 and in Brooklyn

125,000 dark chambers without windows of any kind and without light and ventilation. No wonder that it should be reported that thousands of consumptives are walking the streets of New York, and that during one year thirty-seven were found dead in lodging-houses and hallways. This congestion of population and these perilous conditions, are to some extent due to excessive immigration.

During March, 1903, 63,000 aliens landed at Castle Garden. In 1902 Italy contributed to our population 77,275, and Austria–Hungary 73,275, and the increase continues. Were these strangers to migrate to the unsettled regions of the country they might in a few years prove of immense service. Unhappily the tendency is to remain in the cities, and there they choke to suffocation the tenement houses, and overcrowd the labor market. Were a similar disturbance to enter annually the world of capital, the derangement would not be endured. Serious financial complications would ensue, business would be impeded, and new enterprises arrested. But the immigrant arrives, possibly aided to come by those who are to profit by his simplicity and helplessness, and the competition increases, multitudes are thrown out of employment, the dehumanizing process goes on, and slowly sink into drunkenness, desperation and degradation those who have been pushed aside to make room for others.

It is not uncommon for the existence of the slum to be ascribed to the viciousness of its denizens. Occasionally the police and the church are held to be responsible for its continuance. Poor human nature it must be conceded cannot be exonerated from blame, and municipal and ecclesiastical authorities presumably might do better. But may it not be that the root of the evil is rather economic than civic or religious? So long as our industrial methods are what they are, so long as we assume that it is an

ordinance of nature that there must always be a pauperized class, and so long as the creation of wealth is magnified by society above the independence, the happiness and general well-being of the common people, no measures adopted by magistrates and no sacrifices endured by Christians will extirpate the slum.

Professor Marshall, one of England's wisest teachers, observes that "the two great forming agencies of the world's history have been the religious and the economic," suggesting a saying of Aristotle's: "Men must have a maintenance before they can practice virtue." Hence, the Professor writes:

"We are at last definitely setting ourselves to inquire whether it is necessary that there should be any so-called lower class at all; that is, whether there need be any large numbers of people doomed from their birth to hard work in order to provide for others the requisites of a refined and cultured life, while they themselves are prevented by their poverty and toil from having any share or part in that life."

Not until religion and economics join hands and determine this question practically, according to the humanism of Jesus Christ, will there be any prospect of bringing to an end that blot on Christian civilization—the slum.

The church unaided cannot hope to succeed. What effect can her tracts, her missions, her settlements, have on the terrible conditions which are reproduced in some other portion of a city as soon as she has softened or reformed them elsewhere? She cleans up one squalid neighborhood only to find that the filth has accumulated in another. Her ministrations have undoubtedly done good, and without them the insufferable nastiness of slum life would tend to asphyxiate civic decency altogether. They have relieved the sufferings of thousands; they have purified

homes; they have rescued many children from heathen darkness; and yet the area of the slum has not contracted, nor has the total sum of its shame and sorrow perceptibly diminished.

How can we expect its victims to attend on church services? What heart can they have for the house of God? Have they any special reasons for gratitude which should impel them to join with well-to-do worshippers in thanksgivings? Whether they have brought their misery on themselves, or whether they have been crushed by multiplied failures and misfortunes, they are in no position to feel devoutly thankful. We may criticise, blame and denounce as much as we please, it will have no effect on them, and it will not prove that we would be more religiously inclined were we in their place. How, then, can Christians rescue these unfortunates? How can they be won to the saving grace of Christ? This is the vital question; for not until the slum has been blotted out can it be claimed that the church has in any genuine way solved the religious problem of the city.

I have deemed it right and just that the real proportions of this problem should be ascertained and stated. It is so easy for individuals who have given no thought to the subject to censure the church for her failures, when, all the adverse circumstances being considered, she is entitled to some credit for her successes—poor though they are. When reputable citizens are in a critical mood they ought to ask themselves how far their own indifference to religion and their disregard for the social well-being of the people, as manifested by their support of the saloon and their toleration of the slum, are responsible for her restricted achievements. In many instances they fortify the liquor power, apologize for vaudeville shows on the Sunday, disguising the entertainment under the name of sacred concert, do

their utmost to promote Sunday excursions, adopt dishonorable get-rich-quick schemes, vote for corruption in municipal politics, and, in a word, do their utmost to check and counteract the gracious and healing work of the church, and then have the cool impudence to sit in judgment on her failures.

I contend that the judgment is not fair. Society ought to take its own part of the blame. At the best she does not cooperate with the church as she should for the moral, to say nothing of the spiritual, greatness of the city. Her attitude is, perhaps, not intentionally inimical to Christianity, but it is not favorable. The vastness and density of the problem we have examined, however, and even her own selfish interests which are involved in its existence, ought to appeal to her reason and conscience, and should awaken sympathy with the church and enthusiastic assistance in her work of saving the city from its pollutions and infamies.

And yet in saying this, and in believing that it ought to be said, I have no thought of transferring the supreme responsibility from the church to the world. Primarily she is accountable to God and humanity for prevailing social conditions. She cannot demit her ministry without incurring guilt. It is, therefore, to her of prime importance that she should perceive the difficulties in the way of her mission. Whoever else may close his eyes to the real character of the problem that confronts her in the city, she should not consent to be blinded. She must know the worst if she is to undertake the best. Self-deception is always miserable business. I fear that in religious things it has operated very fatally in recent years. We have talked so much of the glory of our Christian civilization that we have not always realized its shame. "See what wonderful philanthropy," we have been exclaiming, "no previous time has done so much to relieve the indigent as

ours. Has not our age reason for standing apart from the hard old 'publican' eras and thanking God that it is better and gives more—tithes of all it possesses—than they?"

Let us be careful, modest. We felicitate ourselves that no other civilization has produced as many benefactors; but have we considered whether any civilization, professing the humanitarian sentiments we profess and enriched with the wealth we possess, was ever afflicted with so many outcast, melancholy, despairing and pauperized beings as our own? It is true that London, Philadelphia and other cities succor thousands of children annually—the Bernardo Homes alone have rescued 48,057 waifs in thirty-six years. "Admirable! Only possible in a Christian country!" And yet, what kind of Christian country is that where such a multitude of pitiable dependents are being manufactured, and where such a host of parents are cruelly indifferent to the well-being of their offspring? Let us be candid and look on both sides of the picture. Christian civilization must be judged by its sicknesses as well as its hospital; by the poverity it fosters as well as by the alms it bestows; by the greed it evinces as well as the bounty it displays; and by the evils which it breeds and fails to eradicate as well as by the sentimental goodness which it extols. Thus judged we must admit if we are honest, that, having been weighed in the balances it has been found wanting.

It is not pleasant to say these things. Who would not rather be silent and let the church dream her sweet dreams of imminent world-wide victory? But woe to the teacher who is blind and leads the blind into the ditch. If anything worthy and adequate is to be attempted to solve the religious problem of the city, then Christians must not delude themselves. If they are content with things as they are, there will be no change for the better. The first step

towards reform is the candid recognition of the ominously grave situation. It must not be obscured by fine speeches, nor extenuated by genial optimism. I, at least, have tried to be faithful. I, who am no alarmist, and who believe that in some way Christ shall prove the victor, have given an unvarnished account of the problem. I have neither minimized nor exaggerated, and what has been said ought, in my opinion, to convince all earnest souls that the time for superficial treatment has passed.

The hour has come for downright seriousness. Trifling, child's play and the paltry remedies that have been suggested of late to the amazement of intelligent beings, human or angelic, must be swept away with other rubbish. We are not engaged in a sham battle. Certainly the enemy is not firing blank cartridges even if some of us have attached importance to such performances on our side. The tremendous significance of the problem calls for grave and thorough discussion, and for sober matured plans of action. What we can do, what we ought to attempt, I will venture to sketch in the following sermon. In the meanwhile let me remind Christians everywhere that without seriousness and moral earnestness on their part, the wisest, yea, the divinest healing measures will come to naught.

IV

THE REDEMPTION OF THE CITY

"And they shall call them The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called Sought out, A city not forsaken."—*Isaiah 62: 12.*

THIS is prophecy, not history. It is an ideal, not a fact. There never has been such a city as this, but there should be, there will be. The prophet is heartening the exiles. How their beloved Jerusalem has been devastated, and has with reason been mockingly derided as Forsaken! But the reproach shall be rolled away. She shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God, and she shall become a praise in the earth. These great and glorious assurances have never as yet been realized. They are for the future, and doubtless the venerable Jerusalem in God's own time will be reclaimed from the sway of the intolerable Turk, and be restored to more than her former grandeur, both material and spiritual. But in the meantime the prediction teaches that it is possible for a city to be redeemed.

While, also, the promise makes clear that God is the supreme source of deliverance, it discloses the place and necessity for human instrumentality. Watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem are not to hold their peace day nor night. They are the "Lord's remembrancers," and they are to take no rest and give Him no rest. Likewise the command goes forth that the way of the people may be

prepared, that the highway may be cast up, the stones gathered out and the ensign exalted. Thus the Almighty allies with Himself His willing servants, and through them executes His purposes. We, therefore, have no reason to expect a city to be redeemed, whether in the future or the present by some act of sheer omnipotence without the concurrent endeavors of humanity.

What, then, can we as Christians do to redeem the modern city from its religious apathy and decline, and from the demoralizing influence of the saloon, the stage and the slum?

At the outset we should lay to heart the warning of the prophet: "They have seduced my people, saying Peace, and there is no peace; and when one buildeth up a wall, behold they daub it with untempered mortar."[1] The figure is expressive, for how shall such a piece of superficial work stand when the rain floods and hail-stones beat upon it? In business and in mechanics thoroughness usually commands respect; but in religion its importance is rarely duly esteemed. Then the danger is that in trying to redeem the city the most childish expedients will be relied on and the most frivolous means be adopted. In my opinion Christianity has lost its grip on thousands of serious minded persons by the infantile ways into which it has fallen of late. The prominence given to young people's societies and to sweet baby talk in prayer-meetings, and the bondage of educated ministers to the sacred whims of youthful church members, combined with the organization of boys and girls into mission bands, and of infants into mission circles, and the creation of clubs and guilds which avowedly are to be as free from religion as possible, have prejudiced multitudes of people, who inwardly resent the imputation that they can be beguiled by such cheap

[1] Ezekiel 13: 10.

methods. It is not that some of these societies may not be serviceable and even desirable, but it is the importance attached to them as measures for the reinvigoration of Christianity which seems to the world so transcendently silly. In their own place they may be well enough, but as agencies for the overcoming of apathy, infidelity and corruption they only excite a smile of derision.

During recent years it has been repeatedly insisted with great fervor that if depleted pews are to be occupied and diminished income be substantially improved, then the service must be enriched. There must be more music and of a better quality, more rubric and grander ceremonies, shorter sermons and fewer of them, and there must be vestments for the choir and robes for the clergy. The most obvious reflection called forth by this programme is that in multitudes of instances where it has been carried out to the full church attendance is not remarkably high and spiritual life is frequently discouragingly low. Liturgical congregations are not numerically in advance of the non-liturgical, and, if the statistics of the *Daily News* are to be trusted, are not as attractive to men. We are therefore warranted in inferring from an induction of facts, that however desirable some of these adjuncts and concomitants of religious worship may be, they do not furnish a solution of the problem we are considering. Whether they are to be fostered or not is purely a matter of taste, of preference and of ecclesiastical tradition. But as a cure for the evils we have contemplated and tried to measure they are totally inadequate. As such they have failed either to compel attendance on the means of grace, or to produce in the people an exceptional degree of devotion to the cross.

In saying this I have no desire to disparage the sincerity or the ability of those who attach more importance to these adornments and accessories than I do. I believe with

them that everything ought to be done that can be done to render the church attractive, and that art should not be ignored, either in architecture or music; neither should worship become stiff, formal and cold. Could it be proved that rituals, liturgies, robes and vestments were potent in developing the religious spirit of a community, I would not hesitate to commend them. Why not? Why should I be unwilling to wear academic gown with its scarlet and purple hood, or surplice also, if it would increase my pulpit power, or give my ministry more unction and saving grace? But would it?

The evidence goes to show that the efficiency of clergies and churches is not an affair of dress, or of special rites and ceremonies. It was not the surplice that made Phillips Brooks what he was, and the addition of a surplice would not have made Spurgeon a grander preacher.

Then, as to sermons, there are as many empty sanctuaries where they are short as where they are long. Brevity is not the determining quality. A discourse that is not unreasonably short and is reasonably long, if it is worth listening to, will be measured by another and different standard than an hour-glass. Short sermons may be shallow and stupid, and long ones may be bright and brilliant, but it is not the time consumed that makes them either the one or the other.

A magazine editor talking to me on this and kindred topics, observed that it was neither the literary style nor the number of words that had to do with the real value of a story, but solely the human interest in it. The style might demand corrections and the length call for condensation, but better a long story faultily told charged with what lays hold of a man, than a short one rhetorically perfect in which he has no conceivable concern. So in preaching. The chief strength and charm in a sermon is its human-

ness, is that peculiar something, whether the subject treated refers to earth, heaven or hell, which appeals to the hearer as designed for him, and which he cannot afford to treat carelessly.

Let the impression go abroad that the pulpit has a real message, and one that is vitally related to human weal and progress, and it will very soon become a commanding influence. What, then, is important at the outset, is that we abandon our daubing methods and our dependence on the superficial and illusive, and get at what is strong and effective.

If the city is to be redeemed the church must be true to herself and to her mission. She must examine herself, correct her faults, revive her courage, and bring herself into close touch with the community, not by denying herself, but by fulfilling herself so completely and attractively as to win the multitude to her altars.

Unhappily there has grown up a feeling of aloofness on the part of many people and they look on the church as distant from them and quite apart from their ways. Not a few wonder for what purpose she exists and whether she has not ceased to be of sufficient importance to challenge the attention of serious persons. So much of her former work has passed over to teachers, social reformers and benevolent clubs that her value to society has been obscured. We hear the questions asked: "Is what remains of sufficient moment to warrant her further continuance?" "Does she serve any practical purpose in our modern world?"

The church cannot afford to ignore these doubts. This estrangement is a menace to her very existence. If it shall deepen into the conviction that she has been outgrown and "lags superfluous on the scene," she may linger a little longer but she will not be able to survive the general in-

difference and neglect. There is yet time to correct the misapprehension. If she is sufficiently interested in her own perpetuity to make the effort, she can overcome this sense of aloofness, and no one else can do it for her. Nor does it require that she shall be continually protesting herself to be the people's friend. It only calls for faithfulness to her avowed ideals, to her spirit, to her vocation, to her opportunities. If she will only take pains to reveal herself in her actual ministries as God meant her to be, she will not be counted as of little value to society. The people will be drawn to her. They will no longer feel indifferent to her nor believe that she is indifferent to them. When this reconciliation has taken place the redemption of the city will not tarry.

The church should render her courts spiritually attractive. We know that the air we breathe consists of certain gases in combination, oxygen, nitrogen, and a little carbon intermixed with some degree of humidity. Derange the right proportions, or charge them with noxious vapors and the result is depressing and may be stifling. We can easily imagine the difference between the pure air of the mountains or seas and the thick, poisonous air of a stuffy tenement. What atmosphere is to the physical happiness of humanity, such is the governing spirit of a church to the vitality and power of religion. Let doubt, depression, discouragement, prevail, and members will go about their duties in a listless, formal way; they will naturally hesitate to invite others outside to share in their woebegone and wretched condition; and receiving a gloomy impression the outside world will not be drawn to the sanctuary, for we love light not darkness, joy not sorrow, hope not despair. Hence the church should cultivate the hopeful, cheerful mood, should dwell much on the promises of God and the assurances of ultimate victory.

There should also be pains taken to promote personal reciprocal interest, the instincts of a common life, and a common brotherhood. I am not pleading for impertinent curiosity or idle intrusion in the affairs of others, but for that sympathetic affiance by which a company of people become a unit, and which finds expression in little courtesies, thoughtful attentions, downright solicitude, and practical helpfulness in seasons of adversity. This grace within should unfold into hospitality towards those who are without. In the commission the command is "go," and the burden of their message is "come." This duty is as imperative as the law of righteousness, of baptism or any other. The *apostolus* of the Greek is one sent, a messenger who has been sent on a mission, and not one who abides in dignity to be sought for. We believe in apostolic descent. That is, in the obligation of seeking, of inviting, of doing what we can to bring all in touch with the ministrations of the church. Let me add that this simple service could not be rendered without thronging the churches with happy worshippers. Naaman was offended when the prophet directed him to bathe seven times in the Jordan; he had expected that Elisha would have done some pretentious and sensational thing. The world progresses not by the extraordinary, however, but by the ordinary, not by a *coup de theatre* but by the due observance of commonplace obligations. The resuscitation of evangelical religion does not really call for scenic displays, frenetic outbreaks, fantastic erratic or erotic beliefs, but for the realization of what always should be the spirit of religion.

In addition to this the church should revive the true and exalted ideal of worship. That it has been overshadowed by excessive pomp, formality and sensuousness, or belittled by the petty, excruciating and undevout endeavors of the average modern choir, cannot be honestly denied. It is a

fact that the public services of our churches as a whole lack drawing power, and are usually looked forward to with any other feelings than those of joyous anticipation. Observe how tardily congregations gather in the city and how readily excuses are found for absence from the sanctuary. Also, it is painful, but pathetically significant, to note how frequently listlessness is betrayed, and how anxious the majority seem to depart. There must surely be a lack of some element, some distinguishing feature which the soul craves in the hour of worship, to account for this deadness. That missing feature, or that feature, which in many instances has been reduced to a pitiable minimum, is spirituality. We are in danger of carrying into the house of God the frivolity of the drawing-room and the irreverence of the counting-house; to convert it into an opera box for the display of our finery, or into a club for the display of our indifference. The affectations, the insipidities, and the artificialities of fashionable life and the rush, the haste and the rattle of business are alike out of place in divine worship. There, at least, deep seriousness should prevail; there, this present world, with its trumpery tinsel and trivial ambitions, should be forgotten; there, nothing should be tolerated that casts the shadow of earth on the glory of heaven; and there, the massive majesty of praise, the sublime simplicity of prayer, the transparent sincerity of preaching, combined with the quiet devoutness and the thoughtful attention of the people should separate such a service from every other observed among men. That it is not so, but far otherwise, accounts for the fact that worship has lost its charm with thousands of our fellow-beings. The feeble and altogether paltry endeavors to popularize religion, albeit there is a sense in which that highly objectionable word may be significant of real power and good, have, I presume, driven as many away from sympathy with it

and its belongings as were ever drawn together by catch-penny attractions. Let Christian people go to church to worship God; let them heartily engage in the service when there; let them by their manner carry conviction to the world that they truly believe what their actions symbolize, and the novelty of the change, if nothing more, would overcrowd our meeting-houses, and ultimately, by its deep significance, would silence the voice of scorn and soften the heart of stone.

There are some things difficult to define, and spirituality is one of them. Nobody has ever yet given a sufficient description of a particular perfume, and mere word-painting cannot reproduce special colors. So spirituality is something that language fails to portray. We recognize its presence, we feel its power, but we cannot in set phrase express just what we mean. It is morality, and something more. Without morality it is impossible; and yet morality is measurably less than the term denotes. Perhaps it may intelligibly be defined as devout morality, ethical conduct springing from living intercourse with the Supreme—the transfusion of divine love in human deeds. Certainly, were there more of heaven in the church, there would be less of infidelity in the world. Where spirituality obtains in worship, there the divine permeates song and prayer and word. The Eternal interblends with the temporal and there prevails a profound and elevating sense of intercommunion between God and man. The entire experience is different from every other. There is in it nothing that corresponds to the whirl and excitement of a political meeting, nothing that approaches the sensuous pleasure of a theatre or even the sweet joys of the domestic circle. It is rather a peculiar and exceptional consciousness of the awful majesty of the spiritual universe, of the deep and solemn mysteries of personal existence and of the ineffable

greatness of Him who is above all, and who yet shares with all, with the heavens that declare His glory and the intelligences that unite in His praise, His wondrous fullness that filleth all in all. Spirituality seems to be the transmitting of this consciousness to anthem and hymn, to supplication and meditation, and to the message that falls from the preacher's lips, and is too exalted and too ennobling to be vulgarized by extravagances or by garish observances.

Is it necessary to add that this higher worship in the sanctuary depends in the last analysis on devoutness in the private life? The congregation and aggregation of a thousand ice morsels will not make a flame, and the meeting of as many souls charged through and through with secularism will not yield spiritual fervor. The reported decline in family prayer, and the earthiness of so many professors of religion, are largely accountable for the lack of joy and heartiness in the public services of the church. Nor will there be any perceptible change wrought by the multiplications of spectacular effects, and none until Christians rekindle the home altar-fires and realize the need in their daily life of constant communion with the Highest.

Beyond even this, the church, if she is to regain her hold on the city, must cultivate breadth of mind and expansiveness in her activities. Perhaps a greater breadth of view obtains in large communities than in country places; at least we know that sectarianism prevails more extensively where the population is sparse than where it is dense. The difference may not now be as great as formerly; but whether it is or not, the fact remains that where multitudes are engaged together in business, and where they are accustomed to bear and forbear in the interest of temporal success, they cannot appreciate the scrupulousness that

stands on questions of rites and ceremonies. While I do not believe it necessary to be faithless to any conviction, there is a demand for union among Christian bodies if sin is to be overcome and souls are to be saved. Think of the magnitude of the problem to be solved, and then decide whether any one denomination is equal to the task. Here is iniquity organized, binding in unholy fellowship its various phases; and what can the few poor sheep of one fold do against the howling pack of wolves? Children of God must accustom themselves more and more to look beyond the narrow range of their little household, and assert their kinship in righteousness with all who love our common Lord, and who desire to do His holy will. In no other way can we hope to present such a front as will shake the powers of darkness.

In cities expansiveness is the rule. We have cheap papers, cheap literature—that is, these things are made accessible to the people. Art invites them, science courts them, and no cause can prosper which intentionally or ignorantly alienates itself from them. Especially must religion fail if it seeks to be exclusive and aristocratic. It came by One who was one of the people, it was preached directly to the people, and its interests were committed, not to the priests, but to the people. The people, then, have a right to its blessings, and they should be placed within their reach. To do this, city churches must not only have their missions and sustain them, but they ought as well to feel a genuine delight when the humble seek their assemblies. The poor do not ask for the gospel as a gift; they are willing to contribute. They demand either that all shall give for its support freely according as they have been prospered, and pew rents be abolished, or that such rentals be placed within the limits of their means. But, whatever plan is followed, we should in every feasible

way, carry the word of life to all classes and conditions of our population.

A listless or dead institution can never hope to flourish among the living activities of a thriving, driving city. We do not resort to the cemetery for any other purpose than to look on the last resting-place of some departed one; neither will the people be drawn to churches from whence vitality has fled, unless it is from the curiosity to see where the corpse-like soul of some friend or relative has found a tomb. The curiosity quenched, they never come again. But where there is ceaseless activity, where one conquest opens the way for another, where one endeavor is followed by others, where the hum of spiritual industry is heard continually, and where rest is never sought and never expected,—there is a charm about such a church that is potent for good. Moreover, be it understood, that everything that is accomplished for Christ in cities can only be brought about by aggression and invasion. The barriers reared by indifference must be broken through; the breastworks reared by business or by dissipation must be stormed. The people will not of themselves seek the church—the church must seek the people. She must appreciate their necessities, realize their difficulties, and go after them, into mansions and hovels, counting-houses and squalid garrets,—into all places of habitation and resort. When she does this, and when she is fully alive to every opportunity of good, then the talk about her inability to meet the spiritual necessities of great centres of life will cease, and her saving power be devoutly recognized.

In addition, for the city church to be successful she must provide adequate facilities for her work. Do we ever consider how totally unfitted many of our sanctuaries are to the needs of the new time? Everywhere in metropolitan

communities the eye rests on improved buildings, massive and convenient, devoted to business, while on every side are antiquated, poorly ventilated, and occasionally dark, grim and unsanitary structures set apart for religious uses. With only a moderate number of exceptions, these structures were reared many years ago, in London perhaps a century or two ago, in New York and Boston possibly more than half a century ago; and were fitted for the wants and to meet the demands of a society vastly different from our own. These meeting-houses have to a great extent been outgrown. They are not attractive and they are not adapted to practical and aggressive Christianity.

Sunday-school rooms are only a makeshift and do not appeal to children. They were not built with reference to their interests, but for prayer-meeting purposes. For lack of suitable accommodations, accommodations which I am ashamed to say have only been furnished by relatively a few congregations, the scholars have been crowded in dingy vestries or chapels, sometimes seated on high seats or in stiff-backed pews, and have been obliged to make the most of their surroundings.

This inconsiderateness is only a part of the short-sighted policy that has been followed by the church in dealing with the religious education of the young. She talks a good deal about this education, protests against ecclesiastical control of public instruction, and yet what does she herself do? Her donations of money to this object fall far below its importance. She has begrudged the outlay for fitting up suitable school accommodations, and while she is setting apart millions for the establishment of colleges, and for the benefit of higher learning she has created no endowments for the support of superintendents and expert teachers, and for the more complete religious education of children. Throughout Europe and America, particularly

in cities, hundreds of thousands of boys and girls are growing up in ignorance of God and the Bible, preparing to constitute a yet larger non-church-going population than exists at this time. The next generation will be less amenable to religious influences than the present, unless something worthy the enormous interests at stake shall be done to gather the not neglected hosts of little ones to the side of wise and sympathetic Christian teachers.

It must also be apparent that few of our sacred edifices in cities have been so arranged as to furnish young people with the means necessary for their guilds, socials and classes which are of so much value to them. Multitudes of youths and maidens come annually from their country homes seeking employment, and many of them fall into evil ways and perish. Their miserable fate is not due to any special antagonism on the part of the city. A city is not cruel and does not conspire. It never stops to plot, it only attends to its own affairs. The boy and girl find themselves the centre of absolute indifference. They are not noticed, they are not restrained by the feeling that friends are taking a kindly interest in them and they wander into the ways of sin. In New York, London, Chicago and other cities pool rooms are thronged every night with those who have come up from the country, and who are not old enough to resist the fascinations of various games. They are lonely. Where shall they go? The majority of churches have no rooms set apart for their use. It never has, perhaps, occurred to them that they ought to house these tempted ones and furnish them with some means of harmless diversion. And from their altars these inexperienced and immature ones drift into vice and final ruin and wretchedness.

If she insists on overlooking the claims of the young she will only render the present religious crisis more acute, and

if she intends to respect them, then she must depart from her antiquated church arrangements and provide for the special work which is forced on her by the changed conditions of the age.

The day of the small, unmeaning meeting-house in big cities has passed away. In saying this it is not necessary to construe it so literally as to assume that there may not be a need yet in certain quiet, retired neighborhoods for its survival. I am thinking of the congregations that are planted near the heart of a metropolis, and that are called on to lead in Christian endeavor. These congregations must abandon the contracted houses of worship, which when constructed were not designed to serve any end other than what we call divine service.

In the future church edifices should be sufficiently large and commanding to be inviting and hospitable. These small, dwarfed, meagre looking church houses, of which there are so many, seem to say by their appearance to the people:—We never expected you to attend, we have not provided for you, and we would not know where to put you were you to come in. Consequently, they stay away. The opposite impression is produced by a massive, stately building. Crowds usually go where there is room for them. Ministers of experience know that, as a rule, it is easier to fill an auditorium seating three thousand than it is to fill a chapel seating about five hundred. Moreover where these great congregations are gathered, the worship is more inspiring and it is not as difficult to raise all the money necessary for the support of the work as it is where the attendants are few—and select.

The typical modern church will be simple, dignified, artistic, cheerful—always bright and cheerful—no "dim religious light" whatever. Every day in the week it will be open to the weary for rest, prayer and praise. At ap-

pointed hours competent persons will be present that consolation, sympathy, assistance may be rendered to the suffering and troubled. Every evening religious services will be held, and at the same time, in other parts of the building, classes, guild meetings, lectures and innocent amusements. On the Sabbath, in addition to the regular seasons of worship, there will be special services arranged for children in which visual instruction will be given and attention be bestowed on musical training. To meet the demands arising from various kinds of work the church will have connected with it a parish house, so that the relation of the two may be manifest, and so that many things may be done at the same time and practically under the same roof. Such a cathedral institution, not administered as a mission among the poor and desolate, where now a faint resemblance to it may occasionally be met, but located in the heart of a city and among the well-to-do, would convince the most skeptical that the church is related to the common life of the world, and is not estranged from the actual needs and interests of humanity. In fifty years from now, if Christianity survives and advances as I believe it will, this ideal will be the commonplace type of a church, and any other will receive only scant approval.

Then, finally, for the church to regain her hold on the city she must identify herself with whatever makes for the social well-being of the community. While environment is not everything, or the chief thing, it is something, and that, too, of great importance. Religion suffers when poverty deepens into squalor and filth, and when crime and vice are encouraged by municipal corruption. Christianity wilts and becomes nerveless when the atmosphere she is compelled to breathe is poisoned by the miasma of civic rottenness. She is bound to uphold righteousness, and dare not withhold her support from men and measures

that make for reform. She cannot but antagonize the rum shop, and expose the sophistical arguments for its being open from one P. M. to eleven at night on Sunday.

How the powers of darkness must laugh derisively at the simplicity of those who believe that the saloon would keep faith and not open and sell before or after the hours named—as if the saloon ever kept faith with anybody! How delusive the plea that it should be granted this additional lease of power to prevent the violation of law; whereas it is undeniable, that even should the remedy prevent the violation of the excise statutes, it could only lead to the violation of others—the laws of sobriety, honesty and peace. When it is insisted that certain excise ordinances should be repealed because they cannot be enforced, we may remind the pleader that the same may be said about the revenue laws against smuggling, which are being evaded all the time. If the first class of legislation leads to dishonesty and bribery, so does the second. Why not then abolish both and government confess its incompetency?

While Christianity should protest against whatever enactments make for intemperance, she should not forget that there is need for a substitute to take the place of the saloon. Not without show of reason is the plea that the poor need places of resort, diversions, and lacking these drift into the bar-rooms, and that the only remedy lies in providing them with something better. An enterprise in this direction has been attempted in England with success. We ought to face the issue in America. The regeneration of amusement ought now to receive the careful attention of Christian business men, and if the subject could only be approached without prejudice, and with the distinct appreciation that wholesome entertainment is desirable and right, much could be done to abate the saloon nuisance and to diminish the number of cheap gambling resorts and

degrading shows. Capital would be needed, but, as experiments have proven, the investment would be financially sound and the good accomplished would yield incalculable advantages to the entire community. What is really a greater desideratum than capital is downright common sense, and an earnest purpose to save the masses, not by urging them to become anchorites and ascetics, but by a courageous and intelligent attempt to furnish them with the necessary means for rational and elevating enjoyment.

In accord with this spirit, the church, likewise, should constantly put forth her energies for the comfort and happiness of the general public. She should lead the citizens to think of a city as one great family having a common life, to the contentment and gladness of which no individual ought to be indifferent. What pride can persons take in a metropolis where the struggle for existence has been rendered degrading and despairing? "Is the city my mother? Is she not rather an enemy?" Such questions must often occur to the denizens of sweaters' dens, and to those slaves of toil who, if they cease to work, know they must cease to live. Napoleon III is represented, on seeing groups of discontented workmen on the streets, as commanding one of his officers to have the dome of des Invalides regilded. He knew that the work would divert the attention of the people from their real or fancied wrongs. Such a policy we hope may never be necessary in any American town, but if it is to be rendered unnecessary we must cultivate more and more the family feeling among our citizens.

The suppression of pauperism and the reduction of mendicancy to the minimum are matters of prime importance; and the prosperity and happiness of the public demand that this be accomplished, not by an increase of charities, but by an increase of industries. We have

Commissions composed of prominent men on conciliation, on art, on banking and many other things, but we have no Commission on Labor—that is, on the question how can labor be furnished to the greatest number of citizens and supplied in such a way as not to interfere with the right of childhood to its childhood, and in such a manner as to secure a reasonable support to the toiler? This is the most important social and industrial inquiry of our time. It ought to be dealt with seriously, scientifically and squarely. In no other way can we really begin to make a final end of the slum, of squalor, social sin and social shame.

The world's history demonstrates that the more there is given for relief, the larger and more imperative the needs and demands become. Almsgiving may alleviate, but it does not cure, and if continued only creates a class of hopeless and helpless paupers. This class becomes a tax on the resources of a city, a source of peril to its health and morals, and comes in time to feel that it has a right not only to the dole it receives but to far more, and therefore evinces no sense of gratitude for benefits conferred. The situation is unnatural and dangerous, and the practical master minds of the age should give it immediate attention.

Then, this family spirit, this identity of interest, will further be promoted by placing within the reach of all the common blessings of our civilization. This we do in part now. We should do it yet more completely. There are our public schools, our courses of free lectures, our open air concerts, and our holidays. These are steps in the right direction. But we need more schoolhouses and increased facilities for the enlightenment of the people. We need, also, in every great district a free Communal Hall, somewhat after the plan of the "People's Palace" in London, free to the citizens, where music, cheerful diversions,

books, papers would be accessible, and where human intercourse under proper conditions would be possible. These centres would deepen and intensify the civic spirit, and would make the humblest feel his oneness with the city. If through endowments and gifts of the wealthy many of the churches could be made free to the public, the indigent would not be hindered by their poverty from participating in worship, and the religious life would be more general, and more highly prized than it is at present. On this whole question the Duke of Devonshire has recently expressed himself eloquently and earnestly:

"We in these days live fuller and more active lives than our predecessors. Every class, from the highest to the lowest, from the wealthiest to the poorest, look to greater advantages, and to a better and higher life. We all of us, whatever our position, want better, more comfortable, and more sanitary houses; we want better and more commodious streets; we want better means of locomotion; we want better and purer water; we want more light; we want more care bestowed on the protection of persons and property; we want better provision against disease; we want better care of the aged, the sick and the infirm; we want more amusement for our leisure hours; and, above all, we want increased facilities for the education of our lives. All these things, to a greater or less degree the rich and wealthy are able to provide for themselves; but they can only be provided, so far as it is possible to provide them, for the masses by the organized and collective efforts of our municipalities. I cannot conceive any more interesting study than that of the means by which, without impairing the independence, the self-reliance, and the self-helpfulness of our people, these improvements in their social and material condition can be provided for them."

An English aristocrat can talk in this enlightened, dem-

ocratic fashion, and be commended, but probably were he an American and in an American pulpit, he would be criticised by our plebeian plutocrats for putting dangerous ideas in the heads of the people. And yet, if the church is to grow and is to move the present age to righteousness, she must take an active interest in just such sentiments; and should put forth as her programme for municipal peace, purity and progress —

Work for all and all for work; and alms, if possible, for none; and religion, education, privilege, diversion impossible to none and available to all.

It was, I believe, Henry of Navarre who said as he forsook the Protestant cause: "Paris is worth a mass." Whether, as he lay down to death by the dagger of Ravaillac, he still held to this valuation, I know not, but I am quite certain that the redemption of the city is worth a sacrifice. If ever it should be lost to Christianity, the country will soon be lost to Christianity as well, and neither will be saved to Christianity unless believers are prepared to pay the price—in thought, anxiety, in pecuniary offerings and personal endeavors. It is an illusion to assume that a great system, wise provisions, and sacred traditions, developed in former times, are of themselves sufficient to arrest present encroachments of evil. Neither institutions nor laws, neither Bibles nor Sabbaths, are competent to deal with the invasions and the active assaults of the powers of darkness. The man behind the guns, and not merely the guns; the man in the driver's cab of the engine, and not merely the engine; the policeman and the courts back of the law; and the living Christian back of resolutions, creeds, usages and custom, are essential if practical results are to be achieved.

Rudyard Kipling in his new volume of poems has one entitled "The Dykes." It is founded on the familiar idea

that the barriers reared by the people of Holland long ago to keep out the sea need to be constantly watched, strengthened, repaired. The poet pictures vividly the folly of the new generation; for the descendants of the builders have come to take for granted that these barriers will continue to guard their fields from inundation though they are not actively concerned in their preservation.

"Time and again has the gale blown by and we were not afraid;
Now, we come only to look at the dykes—the dykes our fathers made."

This confidence, however, is sadly misplaced, for the hour arrives when the gale and tide combine to sweep away the structures that have withstood for many years their rage. The ocean deluges the land and desolation reigns. Then it is, when darkness has spread over the sky and night is terrible with the groans of the dying and the fears of the living, that the careless and guilty ones cry:

"Now, we can only wait till the day, wait and apportion our shame!
These are the dykes our fathers left, but we would not look to the same.
Time and again were we warned of the dykes, time and again we delayed;
Now, it may fall, we have slain our sons as our fathers we have betrayed."

This lesson needs to be carefully pondered by the followers of Christ. The fathers built the dykes—reared walls of defense—theologies, worships, missions, philanthropies —and hoped by these provisions to check the inroads of infidelity and iniquity. But we may trust these things too implicitly and assume because they have done well in the past they will always of themselves prove equal to any

strain in the future. The dykes were not sufficient. Neither is the sum of all that constitutes organized Christianity, whether of doctrine or of machinery, adequate to accomplish what must be done if religion is to bless the world.

It is Christianity *plus* the Christian—the Christian supervising the defenses, repairing the breaches and unceasingly battling with the floods of wrong and corruption—that may hope to redeem the city and revive the faith of her citizens.

Does he consider the city worth the sacrifice?

V

CHRIST AND THE COUNTRY CHURCH

"And He went round about the villages teaching."—*Mark 6 : 6.*

JESUS did not neglect the small communities remote from the large cities and at a distance from the public highways. Where the caravans of commerce rarely, if ever, halted, and where the fashions and foibles, the splendors and the shame of civilization had not corrupted the simple life of the people, the gracious Master did not disdain to dwell, and, as at Bethany, to draw the humble inhabitants into friendly intercourse.

He knew that the poorest hamlet had rights in His love, that the shepherds and husbandmen had souls to save, and that the entire countryside would only be the fairer, the purer and the sweeter for His ministry and message. More than once He went back to the little rambling town of Nazareth, where He had spent His early years, that the plodding men and women who had been intimate with Him from His boyhood might walk in His light and rejoice in His salvation. And when with all the insolent bigotry and dogmatic narrowness, frequently characteristic of rustic and provincial communities, they thrust Him forth with cruel derision, He did not turn His back in anger on all such settlements. No; He was only grieved at their blindness and went on His way. As it is written, "He went round about the villages teaching;" or as it might have been expressed, "to other villages;" for after all, Nazareth, with its stupid assumptions, was little better.

Nor can it be proven that He was much more successful, or was received more cordially in these nameless localities than He was by the citizens of Nazareth. Everywhere He was treated with incredulity and sometimes with incivility. The peasantry generally would have none of Him, and apparently were less disposed to examine His credentials than were those who had felt in some degree the comparatively liberalizing influences of a city like Jerusalem. This is a significant circumstance, and not without its bearing on the religious condition of our age.

Christianity at a relatively early date might domesticate itself in Rome, or in Alexandria, or in Constantinople, and rear its altars in heathen temples; but the rural districts were not equally accommodating and hospitable. As Pudentius terms them, the "*pago implicitos*" clung to their venerable mythologies and superstitions, and for a long while resisted to the death the advance of the Cross. The Latin word "*paganus*" means a villager, and it came to be used as descriptive of a cult when that cult had been abandoned by refined society and was cherished with singular devotion by peasants. Among them it found supporters, and when politicians, plutocrats, philosophers and princes had become Christian—at least nominally—these sturdy children of the field and forest continued to render homage to the false deities whose names were interwoven with the history of the empire. The Pagan party was vigorous in the East as late as the sixth century, and traces of it were easily found in the northern mountain districts, in the villages of Piedmont, in the islands of the Western Mediterranean, and among the South Saxons during the four hundred years that followed the advent of the Holy Spirit.

Evidently these country folk, these semi-barbarians, were not distinguished by the "open mind," were not tolerant

of religious rivalries, and were indisposed to imitate the cultured Athenians in perpetually craving new things. They loved the old, clung to the old, and desperately fought for its survival and supremacy.

This uncompromising and stolid antagonism, though it must at every turn have perplexed and disheartened primitive Christianity, may not be without some measure of comfort in these times of religious crisis. For if dwellers in hamlet and village are so tenacious of the faith, and if they are not easily seduced from their allegiance to its teachings, then we may hope that now, when in cities multitudes are neglecting the house of God and are in revolt against the supremacy of spiritual things, they at least will stand faithful and will preserve the precious heritage received from Christ and His apostles. We must admit, however, that we are not sure of this comfort. It is intimated that there are signs of wavering. Here and there voices are sounding an alarm. Church attendance, we are told, is declining in small towns and in rural neighborhoods. Conversions, it is said, are not as numerous as in former years, and other tokens are not lacking of religious decadence.

If these representations have any sufficient foundations, remembering how slow and unwilling country people are to abandon the faith in which they have been reared, we are confronting a state of affairs more portentous and more ominously fraught with serious consequences than appear on the storm-charged clouds in other quarters. If they, who naturally and by force of habit are conservative and suspicious of change, falter and doubt, if the present religious crisis has extended to the country, then we are face to face with a graver issue than even the religious problem of the city presents.

But what are the facts? To what degree has Christian-

ity lost its hold on the smaller towns, villages, and rural districts in this land and in others? Has it perceptibly declined in influence? If so, what are the causes? Can anything be done in the emergency? Can the turn in the tide be stayed or must it be left to flow onward to the sea, carrying with it many of the noblest dreams of humanity? Is history repeating itself? Have we reached a period when the teachings of the Master have lost their charm for those who dwell on farms and in closest fellowship with nature, and are they now, as at the first, rejecting Him who came to be the world's chief benefactor and only Saviour?

These inquiries are imperative and demand serious consideration, and in bestowing on them the thought they deserve we doubtless shall arrive at some definite impressions regarding

Christ and the Country Church.

The cities of Europe and America cannot afford to be indifferent to the religious condition of "regions beyond." While it is true that the vast aggregations of humanity influence the less densely populated provincial centres, let it not be supposed that the latter have no perceptible influence over the former. They act and react on each other. The day was when Paris proudly claimed to be France, and occasionally Londoners may have been ambitious for their metropolis to be England. But all such pretensions are fanciful and less likely now to be realized than in the past. In no instance does a man so betray his ignorance of the age in which he lives as when he assumes that the city rules the country, and that what passes muster there is bound to be accepted by the rural population. It is well before being sure of anything, either political or religious, to wait until the "back counties" are heard from. Intelligence is now so wide-spread, the intercourse between

large and small communities so frequent and intimate, and education so common and popular that, as some one has said before, the brains of a modern nation are no longer confined to the head, but are diffused through the entire body.

Whether it be Berlin, Vienna, New York, or Boston, a large and ever increasing proportion of their inhabitants comes from hamlets, from prairie homes and from lonely log cabins where youth has dreamed its dream of fame and wealth. On a thousand dusty highways at this very moment Whittingtons innumerable are plodding along hoping to be some day the honored lord mayor, the chief burgomaster, or lord provost of a London, an Antwerp or an Edinburgh. The indebtedness of cities to such adventurous comers is not denied. They have been and they are prominent and influential in civic affairs, and they are among the greatest leaders in finance, literature, industry, philanthropy and religion. What New York is to-day for good or bad is in no small degree due to their activity and influence; and every other metropolis, in its virtues and vices, in its dignity and degradation, reveals traces of their handiwork.

For be it understood that the balance is not always in favor of the courageous rustic. What he has done to advance municipal purity, prosperity and legitimate pride is not challenged. Indeed, it is so often extolled, that generally the other side is overlooked. And yet if he brings with him lawless passions, impure appetites, shiftless habits and a reckless, profane, irreligious temper—as he sometimes does—and if he seeks in his new sphere a place where he can throw off restraints, he becomes to the community a source of moral corruption, as a polluted stream from the interior, contaminated by the sewage of many meagre settlements, will infect the blood of the greatest

cities. It is, therefore, a matter vitally affecting the well-being of every such city that the source of supply be kept as pure and as sweet as possible, and that these bucolic contributions to its citizenship bring with them only that which refines, elevates and purifies.

The position of Christ in the country church, the welcome He receives and the influence He exerts, will go a long way in determining the character of those who come to play their part in metropolitan life. This, I assume, will be conceded. It will, also, be admitted that the religious condition of those who till the soil, who drive the plough, who delve and mine, and who dwell remote from the marts of trade, should never cease to be the serious concern of all who make their home in the city.

It may not be superfluous for me to add that spiritual blessings are far from being unimportant to those whose lot is cast in the obscure and lonely localities of a nation. Much has been written in praise concerning the beauties of nature and of its softening and harmonizing influences. Rhapsodists, like Ruskin, and poets, like Wordsworth, have familiarized us with its manifold charms, with the rich, variant hues of its foliage, the radiant colors of its flowers, the interfusion and interblending of its lights and shadows, the drowsy and musically monotonous hum and buzz of its insects and the solemn grandeur of its shaggy glens and mist-wreathed mountain heights. To judge from the impassioned eloquence of various authors it might be inferred that human innocence, human dignity and happiness could never fail in those chosen spots where nature is at her best, and where man is shut up to communion and fellowship with the invisible spirit of the scene.

May it not be, however, that these ecstasies are somewhat overwrought? Let us admit the occasional exalted mood that may be inspired by the ocean, by the large

gloom of a dense forest, by the golden tints of harvest fields, or by the glint of silvery dew on the grass and the warblings of light-winged birds in the upper air. Still, this is not all. There is another side. It has been stated that women grow melancholy on their lonely homesteads, and that not a few of late years have been taken from farm-houses on the prairies and from log huts on the frontier to the lunatic asylum. Scrutinize the faces of men who gather at some county seat on Court day, and mark the signs of depression, discontent and weariness. Their features are not lit up with pleasant memories, or with cheering anticipations. They look like men who have found nothing in life and who have no particular interest in anything beyond the price of cattle or the possible value of the ripening grain. They rarely smile; they are not usually responsive, and they speak and act in a dull, slow, cautious kind of way. Nature has done very little for them. She has not enlarged their horizon, deepened their sensibilities, or illumined their mind. There are, we admit, many exceptions to this dreary type of character. But generally speaking the dwellers in rural districts are thus unimpressionable and unimaginative.

The country, then, is not sufficient of itself. Something more is needed:—Religion; Christ! One is needed to companion with the solitary in the lonely vale or on the mountainside; one, to fill the soul with visions of eternal peace and beauty; and one, who knows how to arouse all that is true and noble in the heart of man. I am not surprised that women go crazy on the seemingly illimitable plains if they have no comradeship with the Master. Culprits have been driven to madness by the silence and narrowness of their cell. But vastness is as bewildering as contraction, and the stillness of a spacious desert is as oppressive as the unbroken quiet of a meagre dungeon.

Neither am I astonished, if they are strangers to our Lord, that men who have spent their days in villages or in rude towns on the edge of the wilderness, are dull, dumb and despondent. They have little to divert them, little to rescue them from brooding and little to thrill, excite and startle.

The peasant class of Scotland, to which such virile, God-fearing men as the fathers of Robert Burns and Thomas Carlisle belonged, was respected throughout Europe a hundred years ago for its intelligence, its courage and nobility. But these were Christian peasants. They were men of The Book. Their strength, their sagacity, their cheeriness, and their patriotic interest in public affairs, was not the result of their communion with nature, but of their acquaintance with the Bible and its Author. The inference is transparent. The country needs more than the country —it needs the Christ. Could my voice reach all those who dwell, whether in the old world or the new, by themselves apart in the forest or in the desert, or in the humble communities that lie aside from the thronged metropolis, I would entreat them by their loneliness, by their monotonous days, by their depressing cares and sorrows, to cherish the faith of the cross, and cling unwaveringly to its glorious assurances and hopes.

If we may believe some students of our times this exhortation comes not a moment too soon. The religious problem of the city, we are told, is matched by the religious problem of the country. Even there in its very stronghold evangelical Christianity, it is said, appears to be decadent. Horace Bushnell years ago called attention to a trend towards barbarism in rural communities, and we must have noticed the frequent outbursts of flagrant crime, bank defalcations, daring robberies, and cold-blooded murders, in quiet neighborhoods where nature's loveliness, it would

seem, ought to have chased away all villainous and vicious thoughts. Disreputable districts, and filthy corners, where drinking, gaming, and other abominations are covertly indulged, disgrace town and village as they do the great cities of the world.

The trail of the serpent is as real, though not always as manifest, in Eden as in Babylon. No longer can we honestly believe in Paradisaical innocence as necessarily reigning where the primeval forest casts its shade, and where the hedgerows blossom and the wild flowers bloom. The heathenism of free-love theories, the polygamy of Mormons, the obicism of benighted negroes flourish as luxuriantly in the country as in the city, and perhaps more so. In addition to this, it is asserted that in the former as in the latter, there is a decline in church attendance and in the number of annual applications for membership. The people are falling away. Even entire churches in New Hampshire, Connecticut and Massachusetts have been blotted out and others have been so reduced in strength as to be slowly perishing. In many instances the preaching has lost the note of authority and is rarely attractive. Prayer-meetings are poorly sustained; money for the work is not easy to obtain; and interest in evangelism and the salvation of souls is distinctly on the wane.

Such is the serious indictment. What can be said in reply? Is it true, or only proximately true? Probably, as stated by the hostile critics of Christianity, it is somewhat exaggerated. Nevertheless, it approaches near enough to the actual facts for every lover of humanity to be earnestly solicitous, if not actually alarmed.

A correspondent in the *Commonwealth* (London), a few months ago declared that church attendance in England had fallen fifty per cent. during the last half century. Dr. H. K. Carroll reports that the increase in church member-

ship in America last year was only 1.5 per cent. to an increase of 2.6 per cent. in the population. These figures are paralleled in other lands. They are significant. It cannot be denied that they apply to the country as well as to cities, and may be accepted as indicating some degree of retrogression and decay. It must be remembered, however, that changes of a very radical kind are occurring in rural districts which ought to be taken into account when considering the present religious crisis.

Village churches belong to two classes:—to the villages whose industries have declined and many of whose inhabitants have consequently moved away; and to those that are growing but whose future is not very clear. New methods of industry and increased facilities of transportation have wrought a revolution in the life and fortunes of innumerable towns and hamlets. The small tannery, the woolen mill and carding machine, the cooper's shop and wagon shop, have gone or are fast going after the home looms and spinning wheels. Villages that grew up and prospered on the water courses are generally decadent, and it is hardly a figure of speech to say that the motive forces, steam and electricity, are driving multitudes of young people from their homes into the cities. On this point Mr. Ernest Hamlin Abbott bears witness when in his admirable book[1] he portrays a "Virginia Country Rector": "In this circuit, he (the rector) had seen within twenty years a great social revolution. The character of the population has absolutely changed. He used to have for his congregation people of refinement. . . . Now this element of refinement is no longer dominant. He accounted for this change by referring to the introduction of electricity as the cause, which had so displaced the horse that the breeding of horses, which once was the source of

[1] "Religious Life in America."

wealth in the community, had ceased to be profitable. With the disappearance of wealth, leisure disappeared also, and with leisure went the opportunities for mental cultivation."

This revolution is more widespread than is generally appreciated. It extends through many portions of New England, and has already wrought its paralyzing effects on some districts in the West as well as in the South. In England and Germany the same causes are producing similar consequences. The decline of agriculture in Great Britain and the creation of vast landed estates by dispossessing the peasantry, necessarily drive the unemployed to those active centres where work may be obtained. Unsettled conditions are never favorable to religion. The break up of the old system and methods of industry, with the attendant restlessness and redistribution of population, usually disturbs the mind and deranges the order and habits of the life.

Men and women go forth from their old homes hardly knowing whither they are going, and certainly not knowing what is to befall them, and they do not find it easy to adjust themselves to their strange environments. They feel lost in a crowd when they tread the pavements of a mighty metropolis. The sense of neighborly obligation declines. They absent themselves commonly from church for various reasons;—perhaps because they are not recognized and made much of, probably because the ways of the sanctuary are distasteful to them, and not unlikely because they do not feel well enough off to enter heartily into religious service. In numberless instances such people are lost to the churches in the city, and their migration has left a large vacancy in the country churches, a vacancy which the incoming of foreigners to settle on the abandoned farms, or to inaugurate some novel industries, does not fill,

as they too have their own ways and their own beliefs which do not accommodate themselves readily to their new surroundings.

These facts soften somewhat the dark picture that is often drawn of religious life in country churches. They bring into view forces which lie beyond the power of Christianity to control, and which have nothing whatever to do with continued or declining confidence in its divine origin. Moreover, reports furnished by evangelists and home mission secretaries throw additional light on the murky gloominess of the outlook. These workers assure us that the foreign population is becoming more and more amenable to Christian influence, that some of the neglected sanctuaries are again being filled, and that in various localities, particularly in modest townships, there are signs of spiritual quickening.

Nevertheless, let us not deceive ourselves and be too sanguine. When all has been said that can be said by way of extenuation and explanation, and when every concession has been made to the liability to exaggerate, the situation must still be regarded as unsatisfactory and unpromising.

What can be done?

This is the question I approach with some hesitancy. True, I am familiar with country parishes and with present-day unfavorable conditions. Yet it is no easy thing to suggest a remedy. All I can do is to speak frankly and according to my light. This I shall do, and in doing so it will be necessary to lay bare certain tendencies and weaknesses which have contributed to the evils we deplore.

At the outset I maintain that reform depends primarily on the efficiency of the pulpit. The pastor must lead, he must rise to the level of the need if any important change is to be accomplished. If he is feeble, fickle, faithless, he

will inevitably impede the work of rehabilitation and progress. Great is his responsibility, and I have no hesitancy in saying that his failure to realize it deeply is one of the causes of the present apathy in country churches.

That there are multitudes of clergymen to whom this reproach does not apply I nothing doubt. I have personally known many, and I am sure there must be a larger number unknown to me, far away from cities, the peers in scholarship, refinement, and ability of those who have achieved a metropolitan reputation. Some of the ablest preachers in the world are to be found in humble parishes, and in parishes where the thick smoke from tall chimneys does not obscure the heavens, and where the clamor and clatter of tumultuous commerce do not imperil the soul's serenity. But while this is to be conceded, it is also unhappily true that there are not a few ministers and evangelists in country churches who are uneducated, who have very little idea of the high import of their office, who have no moral earnestness, who are content to be carried by their congregations, and who have no special concern for the immediate advance of Christ's kingdom.

Frequently they are self-complacent and are blind or indifferent to what is going on about them. They seem to be infected with the notion that Protestant lands are really Christian, that the battle has been fought and the enemies of the cross driven from the field, and that they are in possession to enjoy the spoils, such as they are—a $600 salary, a parsonage and considerable leisure for reading. It is this assumption that is accountable for much of the dreary apathy that prevails in many country communions. Is not this God's country? Was it not founded by the Puritans? Have we not here religious liberty and an open Bible? What more do we need? And in the confidence that all is well these torpid, self-contained shepherds, having in

slovenly manner cared for the routine of their office, fail to see that the flock is shivering in the unusual frost and is gradually being buried in the drifting snow.

Country parishes suffer, likewise, from the attitude of another and a much higher type of incumbent,—the ambitious young divine. He has graduated from college and seminary, if not with honor, at least with no discredit, and he entertains no poor opinion of his gifts and merits. A rural church invites him to its pulpit, and he accepts, with the mental reservation that this is only a step to something higher. At the first his culture and his enthusiasm put new life into the venerable and antiquated parish, and could he only free himself from the feeling that he was destined for a more conspicuous station and give himself unreservedly to his work, something worth while might be accomplished. Alas, this is contrary to his plans and character. After a while he becomes openly dissatisfied with his field, imagines that his congregation is not sufficiently intelligent for so brilliant a youth, makes disparaging remarks, complains to friends of the difficulties of his position, writes to older clergymen and even to committees regarding his own eminent fitness for any commanding pulpit that may happen to be vacant. His anxiety for the future involves the neglect of the present, and he ceases to be careful in his preparations for his public ministrations, and naturally his congregations dwindle and his influence declines.

Strange, this gifted creature never seems to realize that when he concludes that his people are not worthy his talents he is no longer worthy his people. If he is not content with them he ought not to accept the stipend they pay. His usefulness is at an end in one place when he is convinced that it can only begin in another. Moreover, he must have forgotten that some of the most notable, brilliant

and influential careers in the gospel ministry have been accomplished in rural parishes. Men of vigorous intellect and of spiritual insight and discernment, like Samuel Rutherford, have been powers for good in their day, though they labored away from the centres of wealth and commerce. He ought also surely to know that there is no obscurity so common and so painful as that which awaits the average preacher in a city. Unless he is exceptionally endowed his removal to a metropolis like London, Berlin or Chicago will simply be a plunge into final oblivion. Of the thousands of clergymen in city pulpits how few are really known beyond their immediate supporters. This ambitious youth, who is yearning for a wider field of usefulness, and who imagines that he is wronged because he is not chosen to succeed a Henry Ward Beecher, would probably be among those who are hopelessly lost in the crowd.

Would it not be better for him and nobler too, were he to accept his humble field as a charge from God, to which he will give his best, and never cease his toil until he has caused the wilderness to rejoice and to blossom as the rose? Were he to engage in his work as though it were the only opportunity he might ever have to make "full proof of his ministry," he could hardly fail to bring much to pass. Not until pastors feel, as many of them do, that there is no field worthier intelligent and consecrated effort than their own, and not until schools and councils realize that rural parishes cannot be built up by half-educated, half-hearted, and wholly incompetent men, will any marked improvement take place in the prospects of country churches.

Religion has suffered much from unwise and careless management and from the indisposition of congregations to give serious attention to its interests. Too much is taken for granted. It is easier to pray than to work, and more

convenient to throw the responsibility on the Almighty than to take it ourselves. I am one who believes that were Christian men and women willing to give time, thought and treasure to the cause of Christ there would cease to be a religious crisis; and no schemes, no sensational remedies, no quackeries, however startling, will ever effect what God ordained should be accomplished by the direct efforts of His people. When it can truly be said, however, as the Rev. Dr. Strong has said, that in the United States only fifty-six per cent. of her resident membership attend divine service on a pleasant Sunday, only twenty-two per cent. frequent the prayer-meeting, and that only one-sixteenth part of one per cent. of their vast wealth is devoted to missions, home and foreign, it becomes evident that too many of our Lord's soldiers are in the hospital or on furlough for the church to regain her position or undertake an aggressive movement.

It should never be forgotten that Christianity has to be newly created with each age. That is, the trials and thinking of the period will modify its form and method. We cannot feel towards religion as our fathers did unless we experience our fathers' vicissitudes and victories. The trouble is we do not recognize the changed point of view, the altered conditions and the new problems. This, I apprehend, is particularly true of country parishes, and consequently no special thought is given to the peculiar needs of the hour, and a disposition is manifest to get along with the old lumbering stage-coach methods, while the rest of the world is being propelled and illuminated by electricity.

For instance, churches in villages and small towns ought to federate and plan together for the advancement of religion. In some communities there are too many denominations striving for supremacy. The world has little interest in these rivalries, and speaks of them in no very

complimentary terms. Several years ago this scandal was vividly portrayed by an able writer in articles entitled, "A New England Village," and "Fall River," and has often been alluded to in the press.

Picture a town with a population of ten or twelve hundred, where there are no millionaries and where earnings are meagre, with a Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian or Congregational, Methodist and Baptist church to maintain, and possibly a few additional sects thrown in—then reflect how genuine religion and morality will be apt to fare in all the circumstances. It will certainly be impossible to fill all these pulpits with adequately equipped men, and having so many preachers to sustain—or starve—there will be little left to bestow on outside objects. It has been demonstrated that when a congregation has to spend all the money it can gather on itself, and thus lives for itself alone and not for others, it speedily weakens and decays. While, as described by the newspapers, it seems odd and worldly, the report of an organized preachers' Trust in Lincoln, Neb., may only be a common sense endeavor to so combine as to conserve the spiritual well-being of the community. Through it the evil of superfluous churches may be abated, and those that survive be better able to support stronger men in the pulpit and yet have a surplus for philanthropic and missionary work.

Nor should it be overlooked that where so many congregations are struggling for existence they are in danger of misrepresenting themselves and the real object of their being. They create the impression, unintentionally, that their perpetuity is the principal thing, and that the spiritual uplift of society is of secondary moment. At this very hour, and within the ranks of a great denomination a controversy is raging, hardly heard of in cities, but disturbing country churches and producing alienations, as to whether

any but Baptist ministers are real ministers, and whether intercommunion between members of the same denomination is permissible. While this debate is impairing the religious spirit of the Southland the work of conversion, reform and morality falls into neglect. After it has run its course the contestants will realize, what outside parties perceive already, that they are contributing to the decay of genuine religion.

Of what real value are these questions after all? Were they decided in favor of either side would the victors be better qualified to win souls to Christ, and would the souls after looking over the battle-field think it worth while to be won? It is my deliberate opinion that these discussions, which do not involve the moral life of the world, are rendering Christianity ridiculous and an impossibility to serious men. Is there not common sense enough left for such trifling to be renounced and for wiser measures to be approved?

There are other steps necessary to be taken. Something ought to be done in the way of rendering public worship more attractive. I have more than once been painfully impressed by the lack of dignity and of sustained interest in the services of praise, prayer and preaching as conducted in some rural churches. The people gather slowly and apparently reluctantly, evincing no remarkable degree of reverence—I am speaking of America. Oftentimes no preparation has been made in advance, and the minister bustles in and holds a whispered conversation with the leader of the singing, interspersed with the rustling of hymn-book leaves, followed by further whispering in the village choir, if there is a choir. The Scriptures are frequently read in a slovenly manner, and the hearer may be grateful if he is favored with anything more than a stale exhortation, or is not coolly informed that the

speaker has been too busy to give previous thought to his sermon.

This disrespect for sacred things, this amazing hugger-mugger, this soullessness when the people are approaching the Almighty in the supreme moment of spiritual communion, is inexcusable, and where it is tolerated no wonder that self-respecting persons, who have some sense of reverence, should prefer to be absent. Nor need the minister be surprised who intimates that he has given no thought to his sermon if an intelligent community gives no thought to what he calls his sermon either.

Now, there is no necessity in the humblest village for this bald, dreary, slatternly kind of worship. Everywhere are to be found people of devout mood and refined taste who could easily correct these imperfections, as they have already done in quite a number of rural parishes, if the preacher and deacons would only give them a chance. And this reform should be supplemented by changes in the means commonly relied on in country churches for the quickening and intensifying of religious life.

Revivals, protracted meeting, and similar exceptional efforts have not been without value in the past, and there yet may be a place for them under certain conditions in the future. Any movement that is the result of a direct heavenly impulse cannot fail to advantage society; but movements that spring from human sagaciousness and are devised to offset the effect of long continued apathy and neglect are likely to prove only a qualified blessing at the best. When they are resorted to as substitutes for the every-day activities of religious life they are wrong in principle and are even dangerous in operation. Churches that have been idle and listless have been known at stated intervals to invoke the aid of some noted revivalist exhorter and to abandon themselves to a species of pious

delirium for several weeks, from which they naturally sank back exhausted and continued in a semi-comatose state until the next violent awakening.

Such extreme alternations have wrought disastrously on the spirituality and efficiency of congregations, and have created in many minds a false ideal of religion. The impression has been made that religion is a spasmodic, fitful, convulsive emotion, and that it is not essentially a holy and gracious fellowship with God and His Son and a continued and unwavering solicitude for the salvation of the human family. The time has come for us all to return to the true conception. Let the churches everywhere cease praying for a "*coming* revival" and devote themselves to the daily care of souls, to the ceaseless inculcation of truth and righteousness and to the constant rebuke of social wrongs and vices, and they will speedily be conscious of a present revival, which will increase in wholesome intensity in proportion as their faithfulness endures.

I have feared at times that the attitude of some country churches towards the recreations and amusements of the young has been so unreasonable that they have injured those whom they really desired to benefit. All the preaching in the world, and all the ecclesiastical censures imaginable will never eradicate the desire for diversion. This desire may need guidance, but it cannot be suppressed. Ministers who labor in cities are familiar with the youthful church member from the country, who has been kept very strictly from every form of entertainment, and who on attaining his freedom plunges into vicious excesses. I plead for more common sense latitude. It ought to suffice if pastors and deacons can develop in the mind of the community a righteous detestation of strong drink, gambling, vaudeville shows and other abominations. If they do this they can afford to remove the ban from harmless home

dances, from dramatic readings and even from local amateur theatrical representations, while they encourage athletic sports and the joy that springs from hunting, fishing, baseball, golf and tennis. Let them in this way come into closer and more human sympathy with the daily life of the parish, and their influence for good will be increased. They will soon discover that the decline of artificial asceticism has led to a corresponding decline in hypocrisy, and that the growth of sanity on this subject has deepened serious thoughtfulness on another and higher.

There is a final cause of deterioration that calls for prompt and adequate treatment. It is now common for the city to empty itself frequently into the country. The very rich and people of moderate means seek in the mountains or by the sea surcease from the weariness of their daily cares. This hegira is not confined to the summer months, but now that travel is so rapid and so comfortable, it is, to some extent, of weekly occurrence. Trains crowded and overcrowded leave London, Glasgow, Boston, St. Louis, New York and almost every other city, on Saturday noon and afternoon for quiet resting-places in the rural districts. These excursionists and week-end guests at private houses are no advantage to the religious life of the little communities they visit. They do not, at least as a rule, attend church, and by their driving, riding, fishing, and occasionally by their less innocent diversions, set an example which undermines the confidence of the neighborhood in Christianity. A writer in the *Manchester Guardian* (1901) gives a very striking account of week-end parties in England:

"Smart people in London generally go away from Saturday till Monday, and in the country houses where they spend their 'week-ends,' Sunday is completely secularized.

The keener spirits play bridge in the garden, and in the evening billiards and cards have effectually displaced those Ivory Letters which were the extreme limit of the gaiety permitted by our fathers. For servants, on the other hand, Sunday is a day of unending labor. Old-fashioned people used to have cold dinner on Sunday, in order to diminish the pressure on the kitchen; or if nature revolted against the regimen, the hot meal was cut down to its smallest dimensions. To-day, whatever of Sunday is not occupied with exercise is given to meals. The early cup of tea, not without accompaniments, is followed by a breakfast, which in quantity and quality, resembles a dinner, and is served any time from ten to twelve. A good many people breakfast in their own rooms, and 'do themselves,' as the phrase is, uncommonly well there. Luncheon has long been a dinner, excepting only soup. The menu is printed in white and gold, and coffee and liquors are prolonged till within measurable distance of tea. Tea is tea and a great deal besides—cakes, sandwiches, potted meat, poached eggs,—and I have seen, in its season, a bleeding woodcock. A little jaded by these gastronomical exertions, and only partially recruited by its curfew game of tennis, Society puts off its dinner till nine, and then sits down with an appetite which has gained keenness by delay. Drinks of all descriptions circulate in the smoking-room and the billiard-room, and Monday morning is well advanced before the last servant gets to bed. Besides all this demand on the kitchen staff, the butler and the footman, it is to be borne in mind that the stables are at work all day, and that ladies' maids and valets live in a whirl of packing and unpacking, dressing and undressing, for a self-respecting woman will adapt her costumes to the day's successive pursuits, and a smart boy changes his clothes as often as a pretty girl."

Except in rare instances, we in America have not *advanced* as far as this. But we are rapidly approximating to this utterly inane, silly and heartless way of profaning the Sabbath and of robbing domestics of their rightful day of rest. With all this going on in the leading houses, and with the arrival and departing of trains, it is not strange that congregations are depleted, and that the rural population becomes as indifferent to religion as their visitors.

While it may be allowed that during the summer vacation many Christian people seek to better the towns and villages where they dwell, it is still doubtful—to me, not doubtful at all—whether their consistent conduct is sufficient to counteract the careless ways of others and the majority. I have known ministers to express their dread of the annual invasion. They have repeatedly stated that these thoughtless visitors suggest wrong ideas of life, and by their example alienate many from the house of God. It is almost impossible to offset their pernicious influence before the summer returns, bringing with it the crowd of pleasure-seekers, and the repetition of their damaging words and deeds. Each year, it is said, shows on the part of the visitors increasing disregard of religious duties, and increasing disregard of the quiet and ruling ideals of the neighborhood.

These are evils that can only be corrected by a vigorous public spirit in the rural districts. They must act for themselves. The guardians of the village or town are responsible for the preservation of its good order and sacred traditions. They have no right, even for the sake of gain, to tolerate abuses which impair the moral and spiritual tone of the community. Let them have more nerve and courage, that is, if they believe Christianity to be divine and its authority worth maintaining. Nor should they hesitate to appeal, as I do now, to those who make their

homes among them for the summer to cooperate with them. This is not much to ask of those who go to sit by the "still waters," and refresh themselves in the "green pastures" for a season. They can, if they will, not only receive good from their sojourn where nature woos them to repose, but they can impart good. By their devotion to the cross, by their intelligent zeal on behalf of human regeneration, and by their manly consecration to everything "pure and of good report" they can help the now struggling church in the country, and incline the people to pray that the Master remain and teach in their towns and villages.

The words of Dr. Phelps are to be seriously pondered: "Civilization gives no sign of perpetuity in history till it is transplanted into Christianity. Independently, like all other social forces of human origin, it rots and dies. Only when it is rooted in Christian ideas does it give promise of a future. The most corrupt nations have been the most accomplished in civilized graces." This statement accepted as true sweeps away every peddling, idle excuse for negligence in arresting the declining influence of our faith throughout the world.

Does the decay of Christianity involve the continuance of civilization? If it does, then the present hour is indeed one of supreme significance. Then the dying down of altar-fires in the city or the country, even the desertion of the humblest meeting-house on lonely prairie or in distant valley, assumes in some degree the nature of a public calamity. To stand calmly by and see unmoved the devastation wrought;—particularly for Christian men to place their profits and their pleasures above their religious duty, knowing, as they must know, that they can avert the catastrophe and that by no other means can it be averted,—and yet fail to take their stand decisively for God and humanity, is

for them to entail on themselves and the world "the misery of an atrocious criminality."

"Church of the Crucified, art thou reclining
Where thy Lord had not a place for His head?
Hast thou soft comforts thy temples entwining
Where His brows throbbed 'neath a chaplet blood-red?
Up from the dust, though it gleam golden round thee
'Tis but the Judas-bribe proffered anew;
Clasp the pierced hand that from bondage unbound thee,
Let the pierced heart teach thee love that is true.

"Church of the Crucified, earth needs thy passion,
Love agonizing the wayward to win;
Pure self-oblation in Christliest fashion
Soul-sweat and travail to save men from sin:
Church of the Risen One, love that withholdeth
Naught that it has God would give to thee now:
Rise in the might that thy weakness unfoldeth,
Bid the whole earth to the Crucified bow!"

VI

THE CHURCH AND THE WORKSHOP

"Is not this the carpenter's son?"—*Matthew 13 : 55.*

JESUS united religion and toil in His own person. His earlier years were spent in His father's workshop; and as He stands by the bench of the carpenter a symbol is created of the union that should ever exist between the workshop and the church. Nowhere is a similar fellowship suggested between the church and the college, or the office, or the bench, or the army or navy. This alliance with industry is unique and stands out by itself. It becomes apparent to us in our Lord's social condition, and probably arrests attention that we may learn, while all vocations are bettered by contact with the spiritual, that manual labor needs in a special sense its inspiration and its comfort. Possibly, likewise, it is designed to teach that while toil is exceptionally dependent on the faith, the faith in its turn is preeminently dependent on toil. What God has joined together let no man put asunder.

Christianity had its origin among the humbler members of society. The common people, we are told, heard Christ gladly. In their hearts His word took root. Over their lives it shed its blessing. These earliest friends, these first disciples—the first-fruits of the harvest, so to speak,—may be accepted as a disclosure of the peculiar character of the religion our Master announced:

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the

meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." This evidently is the religion of the poor. Although it comes to all classes and knows no respect of persons, still its supreme genius is celebrated in the inspired hymn:

> "He hath put down princes from their thrones,
> And hath exalted them of low degree,
> The hungry He hath filled with good things;
> And the rich He hath sent empty away."

Hence it is that Christianity as unfolded by its Founder calls for no splendid temples in which to worship; no expensive vestments for the clergy; no precious metals, no costly chrism, no treasures of gold or silver for icons, censers or for mass. No; an upper room consecrated by faith and prayer, is all the audience chamber the soul needs; the garments of toil are the only habiliments demanded in the service of praise; and a loaf of bread, a cup of common wine and a stream of crystal water furnish the modest materials out of which sacred ordinances and observances are fashioned. Unquestionably this is the religion of the lowly; for not only are its benefits such as touch with peculiar grace the poor man's lot, but its privileges and sacraments are placed within the reach of the slimmest purse to enjoy.

Let us not, however, fall into the easy error of identifying those who at the first so gladly accepted the gospel, with the illiterates and degenerates that make possibly the slums of modern cities. There was no lower East Side in Jerusalem as in New York, neither was there any East End as in London. It is conceded that certain outcast women were drawn to the Master and were rescued from a life of

shame, and that several men engaged in disreputable occupations were also saved. But, as a rule, the disciples He gathered about Him were not representatives of an enfeebled and degraded population. They were in the main of the sturdy, independent artisan class, self-respecting and entitled to the respect of their contemporaries. Their counterpart in this age is found among vigorous and upright mechanics, agriculturalists, fishermen, and among those temperate, self-reliant, thoughtful multitudes who count it no shame to earn their daily bread with their hands and in the sweat of their brow.

These were not the only type of men Jesus sent out as the evangelists of grace and peace. There were others, and laborers too, for this honorable name cannot be monopolized exclusively by those who descend into the mine, who pound and hammer at the forge, who guide the plough through the heavy furrow or who sheet the shivering canvas home on a troubled sea. They too belong to the army of workers who think, write, print, and stimulate the world's activities by their exalted ideals. I am not, however, considering this worthy order when I declare, and repeat what I have already declared, that Christianity was at the beginning fostered by poor, industrious folk, such as fishermen and reapers, who welcomed it as particularly their own, and hastened to transmit its spiritual treasures to those who were as destitute of this world's dignities and possessions as they were themselves.

To me their conspicuous prominence at the beginning is a sure and expressive sign that their continual cooperation is a source of strength to the church, the value of which cannot be over-estimated, and the withdrawal of which cannot be contemplated without serious concern. And yet if we accept the concensus of opinion on the subject, we now confront this very calamity, not as a deplorable

contingency but as a tragical reality. The breach has already taken place. Church and workshop are alienated from each other. Perhaps the church has forgotten that her founder was a carpenter; and likely the workshop has not remembered that the carpenter was divine and came to save the world from sin as well as from social inequalities.

It has been stated that not more than three per cent. of the working men of the larger cities in the United States are regular attendants on religious services. In Great Britain the average is a trifle higher; but on both sides of the Atlantic the falling away of the industrious proletariat is too noticeable for doubt. A recent writer has gone so far as to say that to the overwhelming mass of the population given to handicraft the churches do not exist at all. They live their lives without thought of them, with no interest in their plans and aims, and do not care whether they abide or pass away.

Possibly there are some aspects of this drift that modify its intensity and warrant the hope that it may be arrested. My personal investigations satisfy me that many of the working class deplore the indifference to religion so general among their comrades, and are doing what they can by their example to bring about a change. It is well known among ministers that these artisans are worthily following the Saviour, are usually most reliable members of a Christian communion, and are at present the real bond of union between the forsaken sanctuary and the wandering proletariat. But whatever streaks of light there may be penetrating the heavy clouds, the heavens are black enough with storm and peril for us to be profoundly anxious. The situation at the best is thoroughly unsatisfactory and disturbing. It is at this point the religious crisis assumes its most ominous form. The revolt of a few scholars, the

antagonism of a company of millionaires, the ridicule of the entire cult of literary Bohemianism, and the simpering criticisms of the soulless smart set, while to be regretted, do not weigh in comparison with the damage to Christian prestige and power wrought by the lapsing of the commonalty of toilers. No conceivable loss is comparable to this. The falling away of her natural and original friends from Christianity, and the impression, whether justified or not, that they have ceased to have much in common, may well stimulate serious reflection on both sides of the chasm, and warrants the endeavor I would make in this discourse to reconcile

The Church and the Workshop.

Without being in the least censorious, I am persuaded that the church herself has not exerted herself as she should have done to prevent or to heal this regrettable alienation. She does not adequately feel its portentous significance. It is not denied that in her pulpits occasionally, and in her conventions, she has iterated and reiterated her concern for the masses, and has inquired in a helpless kind of way how and by what means they might be reached. But these discussions, and I have read scores of them, rarely have disclosed any acute and painful sense of the far-reaching consequences of the defection. Usually a few statistics, several declamatory and exclamatory sentences, rounded up with various platitudes, carefully stated so as not to give offense to capitalistic magnates, with an expressed belief that the time has come for action, and that some one ought to do something—who or what left indefinite—and the debate adjourns for another year.

Roman Catholic authorities have a more discerning and a keener appreciation of the situation than Protestants have. They make a good impression wherever they go by

their professed devotion to the poor. They multiply charities which they have skill enough to influence the outside community to support; they rear magnificent churches big enough and grand enough to accommodate and please multitudes, and they are not slow to remind the world that men of the humblest origin may aspire to the triple crown. The hierarchy poses as democratic in its sympathies, and, ignoring the protests of Pio Nono and other pontiffs against liberty of conscience and freedom of the press, proclaims itself the friend of the people and the champion of their rights. Strange to say, however, with all of its avowed interest in the lower and humbler classes of society, if we may judge from the character of these classes in Catholic lands, and from what we see in immigrants from Southern Italy and Southern Germany, it can hardly be seriously claimed that the Roman church has "reached" the masses in any such sense as to make the "reaching" of very great value to them or to the community at large.

Nevertheless, though she may not improve the condition of the ignorant and the lowly she has sagacity enough to realize that her own interests are involved in their loyal support. Drive from her altars the working-women of Paris, Rome, Vienna, and from her courts the common day laborer and his indigent family, and she would be deprived of much of her social and political power. Consequently, she does her best to hold on to these people, and if they are disposed in various localities to abandon her it is not because she has become indifferent to the value of their presence in her solemnities.

At this point Protestants are relatively weak. They may be as anxious for the welfare of the masses as their Romanist friends, and they may give more money for the alleviation of distress and misfortune, but taken as a body they are not as alive to the importance of winning them to

their faith. They are not antagonistic to the lowly toiler. Their hands are open to assist him in the time of sore trial. They, likewise, mildly deplore his absence from religious services and are willing to build missions for his accommodation. Nevertheless, the artisan world feels that there is a lack of heart in these professions of solicitude. While the philanthropic spirit may be genuine, as it does not necessitate personal association with its beneficiaries, it is commonly believed that the expression of religious interest does not ring true as it usually seeks to fulfill itself by dividing what God has united. The working classes will not have the missions. They object to the implied discrimination, and they resent the proposal to found a "Workingman's Church," as they would a church for stockbrokers or millionaires. "The rich and the poor ought to meet together, for God is the maker of them all," is the divine rule, and they plead for its enforcement. What society needs, they insist, is one place and one recurring occasion where, without distinction of rank or fortune, people can gather together and side by side realize their obligations to each other and recognize their common humanity.

The average city church building makes no provision for such promiscuous assemblies. It is small, fitted up like a drawing-room, and is divided up into pews in which the lessor feels he has exclusive and excluding property rights. Visitors hesitate to intrude, and sometimes they may well pause before they take the liberty of entering into the sacred retreat. However benignant the worshippers may be and however amiable, no one would imagine that these arrangements contemplated accommodating the toiling classes. But even if this is an erroneous inference, and if the builders planned to welcome all without distinction, yet the impression made on the poor is unfortunate. They

infer from what they see that they are not expected, and the church if she actually desires their presence has failed sadly in making clear her good intentions. Let us concede that she has only blundered; but unhappily, as we shall see farther on, other blunders are committed, which misrepresent her position in the world, and justify the belief, already expressed, that Protestants are not so concerned as they should be for the cooperation and comradeship of the proletariat in their great work.

It is not easy for the average Christian to appreciate the attitude of the workshop to the church. Nor would I venture to expound it were it not that I have conversed, both in Europe and America, with the representatives of labor, and have visited their homes and familiarized myself with their sentiments. We are assured by some writers that they are not animated by hostility, but are only indifferent to religion. It is stated that while among them are positive unbelievers, as there are among the leisure and educated classes, they are not as a rule abandoned to infidelity. Within limits I can concur in this view. I have met with many genuine Christians in the ranks of labor, and a yet larger number who theoretically hold to the fundamental conceptions of orthodoxy. But I am constrained to add, that the dominant tone of those with whom I have talked has been that of incredulity and aversion.

All in my intercourse have avowed their admiration of Jesus, but these avowals have usually been accompanied by strenuous declarations that if the churches were like Him, if they would drive the money changers out and give the poor a chance, there would no longer be opposition to them. Their language has occasionally been bitter, approaching to invective. Deep down in the common heart of the toiler there is hostility, not only to the church but to religion. He holds them in some way responsible

for the evils of his lot, and is apt to be intolerant when speaking of them.

But he does not speak of them frequently, neither does he think of them to any extent. His preoccupation and the attention he has to give to the struggle for existence have quite removed him from the whole world of religion. He has no time for it and he has outgrown its modes of thought and its chief ideas. It does not appeal to him, fails to arouse him, and is as detached from him as the polar regions are distant from the torrid zone. The subject does not interest him. Its phraseology is obscure, and its seemingly contradictory doctrines a muddle with which he does not care to bother himself. If we suppose that he is specially moved by thoughts of eternity we are mistaken. The imperative demands of this life drive away thoughts of the other; and if any one shall call his attention to the issues involved in the question of a hereafter, he need not be surprised if the reply comes: "Hell! Why should I think of a possible hell there when I am struggling with an actual hell here? I did not make myself, and if the chief artisan of the universe wishes to cast his own handiwork into the rubbish heap—that's his affair, not mine.

If the inquirer can prevail on people of this class to be communicative he will soon learn that this antagonism, passive or active, proceeds from certain impressions, prejudices and prepossessions, which must be honestly dealt with if the breach between workshop and church is to be healed.

There is, for instance, a common notion that the church has been created for the benefit of the rich, that it is dependent on the rich, and that it is attended by a goodly number of clerks and middle men who are striving to curry favor with the rich, and that its only object in seeking the poor is to obtain influence over them and preach

them into submission to their hard lot. Stated in various ways this bugbear accounts for much of the sullen dislike of the institutes and obligations of religion. And yet it rests on misinformation and a totally unwarranted misconception. Statistics abundantly prove that church members are not generally wealthy. They are persons of frugal habits and of moderate means. Occasionally some multimillionaire may make himself conspicuously disagreeable and dictatorial; but such cases are rare. In my experience I have never once been annoyed by this type of plutocratic piety, and I have suffered more from the overbearing ways of ignorant, fantastic egoism than I have from the lordly arrogance of the rich. It ought also to be said that there is much more equality in churches than many lookers-on suppose; and as to the alleged endeavors of small traders to gain the favor of the wealthy by undue concessions, I have this to say, that in the discussion of grave ecclesiastical issues I have known more persons of limited income to gain their way against the affluent than I have known the affluent to prevail against the poor. They have not abated their independence one jot; and they have not hesitated to withstand their more prosperous brother to his face.

Moreover, it should be remembered that the majority of the wealthy members joined the church when they were poor, and therefore must be exonerated from the imputation of planning a fellowship for their own glory and for the sake of keeping their less fortunate associates in submission. There is in fact no greater absurdity than this fiction of a conspiracy. Plottings against mechanics and other wage-earners are as inconceivable as the scheming of sheet lightning to eclipse the sun. These suspicions are the most ridiculous of hallucinations. The church may not have manifested as much interest as she ought; she may not have felt as deeply as she should; and she may

have bungled, bungled inexcusably in her methods, but I am sure that she has never thought harm or deliberately planned harm against the children of toil. Her sins are rather of omission than of commission.

In a line with this ungenerous estimate of the church are other current sentiments which are either utterly false and misleading, or are base exaggerations.

Mr. Ernest Hamlin Abbott [1] reports a reply made to him by a former president of the Baltimore Federation of Labor: "Religion is in a bad way in Baltimore. I say frankly the churches do not welcome the working men, and the working men do not care for the churches. The churches are made up mostly of employers, and they are trying to get all they can out of their men, and don't care for them as men at all." Another writer [2] quotes an artisan as saying: "We condemn the church because it is in with the 'push' and has a 'pull' with it." And even Hall Caine [3] has spoken somewhat recklessly to the same purport. He declares that the churches have always been opposed to efforts put forth for the political interests of the people. "Show me a single victory for humanity that has not been won by the people and for the people and often in the face of the churches."

These are grave allegations and in the present crisis ought not to be advanced lightly and in such unequivocal terms. If these accusations only meant that the church has been at fault occasionally, and has arrayed herself for a time against progress we would enter no protest. Or if they were designed to point out the practical failure of the Greek and Roman communions to elevate the humbler orders socially, and to sympathize with their aspirations

[1] "Religious Life in America."

[2] "The Gospel and Social Questions."

[3] *The British Weekly*, December 12, 1901.

for political freedom we would have no reason to dissent. Even if the note of condemnation is directed against some and many Protestant and Catholic clergymen for not taking sides with labor when seeking better and more humane conditions, as in the appeal of the bakers of New York for fewer hours of work and cleaner sanitary arrangements, or in the case of the motormen asking protection from unnecessary exposure in the winter, we would not, for we could not reasonably, demur. But these representations go farther and signify much more, and much that is untenable.

They overlook the fact that the entire humanistic movement from the beginning has been inspired by the preaching of the church. She it was who forced on the Roman Empire Christ's idea of the sanctity of human nature which underlies the reforms of the centuries—social and political. When it is claimed that the people have won their own victories, the question may be raised, what people? Who were the people who fought the battle of constitutional freedom in England? They were the Christian people; and had the same people been eliminated from the American war of Independence and from the struggle against the slave power, history would not read as it does to-day. If, then, a few bishops in the House of Lords are far astray on the wisdom of liquor legislation, it ought not to be forgotten that the mass of *Christian* people—not *the people*—are the real and strong advocates of temperance reform. They are the ones, also, who are back of the movements that are now making for social regeneration; and even Mr. Caine ought to have been generous enough to acknowledge that but for them, William and Mary would never have ascended Britain's throne, and the liberties of England would never have attained the security they enjoy at present.

While we cannot deny that the welcome to working men

in some churches has left very much to be desired, we are astounded at the statements so confidently made that their membership consists mainly of employers, and that there is some kind of "pull" and "push" by which they are benefited. The fact is that the majority of church members are not employers of labor, and if they are it is mostly in a small way; and the talk of a "push" or "pull," whatever of villainous conspiracy these terms may denote, is downright nonsense. Indeed, the wealthier members are doing more to-day for education than they are for religion. Religion is mainly sustained by the free offerings of the many. Why not accuse colleges and schools of being in the "pull," and refuse to allow youth to receive their benefits as to discriminate against the church? For one dollar of trust money given directly to religion I presume hundreds are given to seats of learning. Has not, therefore, prejudice and hostility to Christianity more to do with these wild statements than real conviction growing out of proof?

One writer with amiable inconsistency blames the church for not being as cordial as the saloon. But why does the bartender extend the "glad hand" and don the smile that *does* come off when the customer has spent his last penny? Is he moved by friendship and by the sincere desire to benefit a fellow-being? Or is he in hospitable and genial mood for revenue only? Rest assured that the patron of a rum shop only gets what he pays for, and when he can pay for no more, the "icy stare" and the repellent frown and the open door—leading into the street—are promptly his. God forbid that the church should copy the cordiality of the public house; for then she would have reached the lowest stage of mercenary hypocrisy—welcoming those who come to her only for what she might hope to get out of them.

We could wish that preachers would speak out when the legitimate demands of labor call for advocacy, and when its rights and its freedom are threatened. I know that they have done this to a very great extent. Not as much, I admit, as they ought to have done, but far more than their critics realize. The fault, however, is not wholly theirs. A good part of it rests with the very people they have sincerely desired to assist. Those ministers who stand by the toiler, do not find the toiler standing by them. They do their best, while the men who are most concerned are conspicuous by their absence. If there should be a disposition on the part of the members to object to their preaching on these themes, they look in vain for sympathy and moral support from those who ought to uphold them.

Moreover, some clergymen and priests are deterred by the unreasonable position taken by those who expect and desire pulpit cooperation. When they have pleaded for arbitration and have aided in adjusting difficulties, if they do not give their approval to exorbitant demands and to a succession of unwise strikes, and if they venture to insist that the non-unionist has his rights, they are likely to be denounced as the partisans of capital and the enemies of labor. Not a few ministers prefer not to be misrepresented by hot-headed walking delegates, and rather than to give their countenance to what is unfair and brutal, they preserve a dignified, though not altogether justifiable, silence. They do not see why, at the dictation of men who never go to church, and who do not understand the church, they should condemn combinations by which small traders are driven out of business, and not condemn industrial combinations by which American freemen are molested for seeking independently of all "unions" to earn their living. When they are not free to do both without being classed with the foes of labor, and when the organized labor of the

country seems reluctant to rid itself of the extortioners, blackmailers and traitors who misrepresent its spirit and betray its cause, they may be excused if they moderate their zeal and wait until Trades-Unionism and Walking Delegates recover their common sense, and, what is of equal moment, their sense of justice, which is, unhappily, less common.

It is important that the church in seeking to end strained relations should candidly remind the workshop that, while she should attempt and do more than at present, she cannot do everything. She must be met at least halfway. No class can ever be saved politically, religiously or socially by some external agency, apart from its own exertions.

Mr. Abbott, in the book already quoted from, asked the Baltimore labor leader what he thought preachers could do to interest those he represented in religion. This was the answer: "Why don't they give lectures on industrial questions on Sunday? Why don't ministers send out circulars to the various Unions announcing such subjects as arbitration, and bring delegates on both sides to compare views?"

Then followed this conversation:

"What, in your opinion," inquired Mr. Abbott, "is the Young Men's Christian Association worth to the working men?"

"Well, it costs six dollars a year to belong, and there's not much charity in that."

"But do the working men want charity?"

"Not a bit of it," was the quick rejoinder. And yet the author adds, giving his impressions, "I found the question uppermost in their minds as they think of the church—What is there in it for us?"

I am sure Mr. Abbott would not accuse these people of undue grasping and cupidity. He will, I think, agree

with me in saying that among themselves and in their families they are generous to a fault. What this dialogue really denotes is a confused idea both of the nature and the function of religion. Working men to a very great extent have come to look on religion as a species of socialism or communism, designed to establish a temporal paradise, a mission which she is able to accomplish herself, unaided by her beneficiaries, and failing in which she is rightly abandoned and denounced. Hence it is that they hold her responsible for the continuance of their ills, and hence the stolid attitude assumed by so many that seems to say: "Here we are, help us, enrich us, redeem us; we have no objection, but we do not feel called on to assist you in carrying out your benevolent schemes."

This shiftless indifference of the millions to their own uplifting has been noted by other students of the social question. It has been stated, though I think too unreservedly, that they seem willing to accept any economic conditions provided "they have drink and sport and animal indulgence in more or less abundance." Furthermore, "the breakdown to-day of the hopes and efforts of genuine reformers is the failure of the masses to rise to their opportunities, a failure, for which, not churches, nor economics, but they themselves are responsible. Find them a religion that can make them sober without giving up the drink, that can give them clean lives without self-struggle, that can make them do well without ceasing to do evil, and they will accept it with acclamation."

While many artisans are exonerated from these charges by those of us who know them intimately, they represent a spirit not uncommon in their class, and which must be renounced if any real improvements are to be achieved. Instead of standing aloof, and instead of receiving each friendly approach sullenly and incredulously, instead of

remaining passive, they ought to reciprocate heartily, and join hands with those who are seeking to help them and their families. Moreover, they should interest themselves sufficiently in their own happiness to strive to understand the genius and aims of Christianity. If they do this they will not, as John Mitchell says they have done,—"give up all hopes of the kingdom of God,"—but they will perceive that it is a kingdom within, that it is spiritual, indwelling in the soul, and working itself out in all gracious, holy and fraternal ministries. When they comprehend this, they will comprehend the saying of the church that were she able to control all the wealth of her members and were she to divide it and distribute it in small sums to the toiling millions, or were she to spend it on libraries, dwellings and diversions for the poor, after the momentary surprise, relief and joy, the reaction would ensue, and society would be pretty much as it was before. Could manual workers of every degree be brought to appreciate this position they would come to distrust the socialistic programme; they would seek more than ever the triumph of the "Kingdom" in their own hearts and in the whole community; and they would unite with the church and vote with the church against the rum oligarchy, the desecration of the Sabbath and every other enormity which impedes the progress of the kingdom, and from which labor suffers more than any other public interest.

The failure of the workshop to bear her portion of the burden does not relieve the church of her responsibility. She must keep on doing what she can, whether she is dealt with generously or suspiciously. It is not for her to be deterred from her sublime mission on account of harsh words and base insinuations. She must remember that those whom she would assist have many trials, and that these are calculated to result in morbid moods and morbid

judgments. Her sympathies must never fail. She must be patient, long-suffering and compassionate as was her Master. When He was reviled He reviled not again. She must also realize that she will gain no advantage by keeping out of sight the Being in whose name she works or the supreme spiritual object of her ministry. Sometimes in her mission halls there has been an observable tendency to keep religion out of sight when relieving temporal necessities. Naturally the people conclude that religion has little or nothing to do with the benefits they receive, and consequently their attitude towards Christianity is not in the least modified favorably.

I know the excuse is that many of the most needy cases are Roman Catholics and it is not right to introduce sectarianism into charity. I am not pleading for sectarianism, and am not urging that any effort should be made to proselyte Roman Catholics through temporal gifts. But if the hierarchy object to their poor knowing that Protestants assist them, then let them cease building so many expensive churches and take care of their own dependent communicants. At present it seems that Protestants have to keep many of them from the evils of extreme poverty, and when the recipients of their bounty have acquired means for self-support and are able to contribute to the treasury of their church, they are not even to explain in answer to the boasting of Romanists that the multiplication of their cathedrals and other houses of worship is in some measure due to the disinterested benevolence of Protestants. The Catholics never assist any one without making known who the benefactor is, and never even open a charity school save in the name of the church. Protestants should learn of them. Nor can they do otherwise if they would not degrade and pauperize those whom they succor. Their benefactions ought always to be means to an end, and that

end not proselytism or denominationalism, but rather Christian manhood and Christian womanhood. That end will not be accomplished by keeping religion, its teachings and offices, from the thought and life of the masses.

If the followers of our Lord would be successful they must not forget the diminishing number of opportunities for Sabbath repose and divine worship. It is estimated that four million of industrious people are compelled in the United States to work on Sunday, and this is more than equalled in Europe. This does not include innumerable cases where the service rendered, as with physicians, waiters, preachers, is indispensable to the ordinary life of the community. The influence of so many being forced to pursue their ordinary task creates an atmosphere of secularism unsuited to church going. To this must be added the weariness resulting from late hours given to fatiguing work on Saturday night, unfitting for the privileges of the Sabbath. When there is not this let up a man is in danger of becoming part of the machine at which he works.

Moreover, it should be remembered that with multitudes of toilers there is a struggle for mere existence. I have heard it stated on good authority, that with the exception of extraordinary times few artisans earn over $600 a year. There are slack seasons, there are times when they are unemployed, and putting good and bad together the wage does not average high. Then the housing of the people is not of the best. They are wedged in and crowded together in our cities. For instance, there are 700,000 people dwelling in the lower section of Manhattan Island—the most densely populated area in the world. Think of 350,000 people to the square mile! In one section of fifty acres there are 80,000 souls, nearly 10,000 more than in the entire State of Nevada, which has over 70,000,000

of acres. "There is a single block on the West Side of New York which contains 7,000 persons." The block looks "like one gigantic house, 600 feet long and 200 wide." We are told by Jacob Riis and Charles Stelzle "that these overpopulated parts of our cities are inhabited by industrious working men." There is one tenement in which about 250 persons live. Let us admit that many are unskilled and others shiftless—still, breathing this atmosphere and enduring these disadvantages can hardly be promotive of thrift, energy or piety. The ordinary conditions of decency and cleanliness cannot be preserved, and the unsavory surroundings must develop a spirit antagonistic to faith. The mass of these victims do not fear death, do not think of it, do not care to avoid it—and have no more thought of the life to come than we have of polar latitudes. They are hopeless.

The depression of the artisan inclines him to yield to glittering temptations. There awaits him the saloon, the cheap theatre, the pool room, the club room, and the meeting for trade discussion, usually in a room provided by the saloon. He knows as well as we do the perils of the rum shop, but then—one must go somewhere. If we are unsympathetic we will probably reply: Why does he not stay with his family, or go to prayer-meeting? But were we unwise enough so to speak he would answer by asking: "Why don't you stay with yours? Why don't the leisure classes go to prayer-meeting?"

A laborer was asked why he occasionally engaged in betting. "I'm not interested in horses," he replied, "but anything to break up this hell of monotony in my life." Another said: "No, it requires the theatre or the saloon with its glittering lights, its fitful music, the whirl of the dance, and alas, the tempting drink to make us forget the incessant drudgery of the day and of the morrow." I am

no friend of these evils, but I know all over our cities, with the exception of a spiritually minded few, there is an intense craving for pleasure. Working people are like the rest of the population, only their narrow resources determine for them the character of their diversions. Would it were otherwise—but it is not, and we must take things as they are and not be visionaries. The church will never succeed in even partially restoring the good feeling between the workshop and herself until she has a sympathetic understanding of these conditions, and makes allowance for them in her endeavors at reconciliation.

Moreover, she must study the best methods of overcoming prejudice and of winning the affections and confidence of the people. Her approach to them must be direct, open and manly. The artisan, as I have studied him, will not respond to pious affectation, or to snobbish clericalism, or to infelicitous evangelical extravagances. To assume that you are better or holier than he is, and to advertise the same so as to impress him is at once to excite his contempt and distrust. Or to send into his family or neighborhood the feeblest representatives of Christianity, while the men of brain and position in pew and pulpit stand aloof, is to doom the effort to failure. Nor will he be greatly touched by inquiries after his soul if propounded in the usual perfunctory, metallic manner, and unaccompanied by sympathetic concern for the difficulties of his temporal lot. This whole problem is too hard for novices. When the church realizes this, when she adapts her houses of worship and her services, as I have already outlined, to all classes, when she is sufficiently in earnest to invite working men and women to her courts, and when she is so deeply concerned as to send her most gifted ministers to visit personally from house to house and to evince their kindly solicitude for the faith and happiness of the people, then and not till then

will she prove herself capable of dealing with the most vital religious issue of the age.

More than this, the church must continually maintain the dignity of labor and the possibility of living the divine life in the workshop. Sometimes I fear she has not magnified these conceptions as she ought, and, inadvertently, let us hope, has occasionally obscured them. This she has done when she has spoken of the humiliation of our Lord in such a way as to create the impression that it was due to His lowly social position, being born a peasant and doomed to toil, and not to His condescension in assuming our common human nature. The doctrine of the Bible is not that He was humbled by being born in a carpenter's family, but by being born in the likeness of sinful flesh, and the humiliation would have been none the less had His mother been the wife of Octavius Cæsar. The importance of this distinction the friends of Christianity have often overlooked. Yet how absurd to assume that in the judgment of heaven a workshop is less honorable than a palace. Imagine for the sake of real dignity the Christ of history deciding to be born in the royal residence at Belgrade, with Queen Draga for mother instead of in some "cottage far apart where God can hear the language of the soul, and in His book of life the inmates poor enroll." There would have been more dignity in having the original hog-driver, from whom the Belgrade dynasty sprang, for a father than the weak and unfortunate prince who was anointed. Let us remember that Jesus chose the working man's station, not because it was less dignified, but because it was most conducive to the success of His mission.

All this the church should make clear, clear to herself as to others, that neither she nor working people may be misled by unwarranted distinctions. She must also encourage the artisan to believe that it is possible for him, however

hard his lot, to imitate his Saviour. The difficulties in the way of his doing this are really no greater than in other departments of life. We may ask the lawyer, the physician, the statesman—and even the preacher, and the answer will be the same—that the world does not lend itself to Christian growth. The drift is the other way. When you climb the mountain, there are always hardships to be endured and overcome. But as far as I can gather it is possible to breathe the divine spirit in the workshop, and labor rightly viewed is conducive to godliness. Formerly many humble persons became noble Christian men, like the fathers of Burns and Carlyle, and many in the same "peerage of poverty," notwithstanding their burdens, have risen, like Hugh Miller, to positions of influence in the world of thought and literature. Even as David when a shepherd boy, rose to the sublimest heights of poetry, so others, equally lowly, having no lands, no Newport villas, no palaces, or material splendors, have created for themselves vast estates in the realms of fancy, and have held communion with saints and angels. Imagination has supplied them with nobler joys and higher fellowships than money could purchase. When these possibilities are overlooked, and the stress is laid by the church as well as by the artisan on the supreme worth of gold and silver and the means of sensuous enjoyment; when both adopt the tone of pity and commiseration for those who cannot compete in luxury with the dreary fashionables of modern life, whose thoughts are mainly occupied with tailors, dressmakers, operas, theatres and the restless going and coming between city and country; then the divine life will naturally be neglected and come to be regarded as unimportant or impracticable.

I have no compassion to waste on the man who has to work, only for him who seeks employment and cannot find

it. Work is a joy, an inspiration, a benediction! It is an evangel of good-will to the world, an apocalypse of future blessedness on earth. It is the creator, conqueror, civilizer. Every day it keeps the world from hunger, cold, filth, suffering, wretchedness and catastrophe. Wherever we view the race to which we belong one discovery awaits us—it is that labor determines the height and character of the people's material and social progress. No work—savagery. Inferior and intermittent work—discontent, lawlessness, brutality. But work for all, reasonable and regular work, work under wholesome conditions and adequately remunerated—liberty, education, temperance, and all the virtues flourish. What a gross perversion of things most evident is it to imply that that which has in its bosom "the potency and promise" of the millennial age, and which allies the creature with the Creator, is a hindrance to the divine life and unfits for its sacred experiences and inspiring hopes.

The church, if she would win back the workshop, must not only preach this, she must believe it. Not until this is her sincere conviction will she appreciate the dignity and importance of the task that has too long been neglected, and bend all her energies to its achievement.

To me as I have contemplated Jesus as the carpenter, standing by the bench in the little shop at Nazareth, as depicted by Holman Hunt, the significance of the vision has seemed to be that through Him labor in the fullness of time shall be relieved of its disabilities, purged of its frailties and infirmities, and come to serve as the latest revelation of God's indwelling in humanity. He is to be the source of its regeneration and the crown of its glory. Heretofore He has disclosed Himself in prophets and apostles, in literature and art, and in some degree, we admit, in manual toil. But something better awaits the world,—a

new apocalypse, as grand as anything John beheld in Patmos. It remains for industry to be glorified. Everything that obscures or defames the dignity of labor, whether the strifes, the bitterness and brutalities, the short-sightedness, recklessness and violence of its representatives, or the sneers, contempt and the rapacious injustice of its employers, shall pass away; and the new age shall behold, what one of our poets has already sweetly chimed—and which without Christ working through His church can never be fulfilled:

"From street and square, from hill and glen,
Of this vast world beyond my door,
I hear the tread of marching men,
The patient armies of the poor.

"The halo of the city's lamps
Hangs a vast torchlight in the air,
I watch it through the evening damps;
The masters of the world are there.

"Not ermine clad not clothed in state,
Their title deeds not yet made plain;
But walking early, toiling late,
The heirs of all the earth remain.

"Some day by laws as fixed and fair
As guide the planets in their sweep,
The children of each outcast heir
The harvest fruits of time shall reap.

"The peasant's brain shall yet be wise,
The untamed pulse beat calm and still,
The blind shall see, the lowly rise,
And work in peace time's wondrous law.

"Some day without a trumpet's call,
This news shall o'er the earth be blown;
The heritage comes back to all;
The myriad monarchs take their own."

VII

THE ARREST OF ETHICAL PROGRESS

"And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."—*Exodus 20 : 19.*

AMID the roar of thunders, the glare of lightnings and the blare of trumpets the footsteps of the Almighty echoed on the storm-scarred summit of Mount Sinai. With anxious eyes the people had been looking for the fulfillment of the promise made to Moses regarding the coming of the Infinite One. And now, on the third day, with the dawning of the morning, instead of the sun, God Himself in mysterious majesty rose upon the world. The mountain quaked, and belched forth smoke; the earth trembled and terrifying darkness robed the granite mass in sombre glory, and the Invisible Sovereign drew near "in the secret place of thunder."

When the sublime sounds which ushered this event had ceased, when the noises which had smitten the multitudes with awe had gone dumb, the silence, more appalling than clash and roar of nature's orchestra was broken by that, which no human language can describe—a voice, the voice of Him, who in "the beginning spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast," and which "then shook the earth," but which shall yet shake "not the earth only, but also heaven."

Wondrous privilege, holy joy, to hear the majesty of that voice in whose sacred tones must blend the harmonies of the universe and the melody of angel song, which being

itself the source of all music must fall upon the soul with all the ravishing sweetness of divinest strains. And, yet, when these emancipated Hebrews heard that which had disturbed primeval darkness, had broken the solitude of eternity, and had charmed into being all things that make our world an abode of loveliness, they shrank back with fear, and cried: "Speak thou, Moses, with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

The several features of this magnificent scene, and of the impressive interposition of the Almighty, were worthy the occasion. A nation had been born. From the grandeur and affluence of ancient Egypt, a people, following the instincts of liberty and the command of Heaven, had gone forth into the dreariness and poverty of the desert. They desired to have a name among the nations of the earth, to found a government, to inaugurate a civilization. To accomplish this they had a country, towards which they were journeying; they had numbers, wealth, skill, and courage, but they needed law—moral law—to impart soundness and stability to that structure which they were intent on rearing. Without this everything else would have been in vain. The wisdom of the Egyptians which they had learned in bondage, the military discipline which hard necessity had taught, and the riches of their enemies which they had carried with them, would only have hastened their ruin, had not all-regulating law been added. Unsanctified knowledge would have intoxicated, unrestrained, soldierly ardor would have bred dissensions, and their very wealth would have proven a source of weakness and corruption. They required the Decalogue, the great Ethical Code; and that it might be given in a manner that would at once convey an idea of its significance and sanctity, its greatness and goodness, its authority and its advantageousness, it was accompanied with all the scenic splendor of Sinai.

Centuries have come and sped away since that august morning conferred so beneficent a gift; the years have followed, swallowing up years as the waves of the sea engulf each other, and the lesson then taught has been repeated, and its truth verified by the strange vicissitudes of countless generations. The Jews themselves at times revolting from the statutes enacted for their government, furnish sad proof that no nation can prosper which is either ignorant of right and wrong, or ignores their eternal distinctions. When they trampled beneath their feet the commandments, they became the prey of the spoiler, were betrayed by traitors, oppressed by enemies, and chastised by God.

The annals of Greece and Rome, of monarchies, empires and republics confirm with instructive unanimity this lesson. From these we learn that ethics underlie all progress, all order, peace and true greatness. Without them the worst elements of society bear rule, the baser qualities predominate, and the national glory declines and sets in blood and gloom. As immorality brings neither health nor happiness to the individual, neither can it bring them to the body-politic. As it eliminates iron from the human system and introduces the virus of death, displaying itself in ulcers, abscesses, festering sores, in flabbiness and flaccidness, so it debilitates and prostrates the State, paralyzing its justice and corrupting all the sources of its strength. No nation is, therefore, wise that fails to provide for its own ethical training and development. To expend large sums of money on schools, in the service of knowledge, and to lavish fortunes on internal improvements and the advancement of art, and to be indifferent to the morals of the present and of future generations is in the highest degree reprehensible. Such a policy is suicidal. It is a tomb-building, grave-digging policy; a policy that is sharpen-

ing the knife for the throat of the country, and that is arranging for its inevitable funeral. Statesmen who deserve the name, and patriots who are not counterfeits, will ever feel an abiding interest in the science of right living, and will exert themselves to the utmost to promote its interests.

It is, therefore, surprising when the Almighty drew near to supply the everlasting foundation of that, which the brief experience of the Hebrews in attempting self-government must have taught them was the one lacking requisite, that they should have thrust a creature between themselves and Him, and should have desired that he, not God, should speak unto them.

Perhaps it will be said that the reason for their conduct is implied in the phrase, "lest we die," and that they were simply impelled by fear. But this does not altogether clear up the mystery. Why should they have been afraid, when God was doing them the greatest favor, and was conferring on them the blessing most needful for their welfare? Believe me, the explanation suggested is inadequate. Their alarm reveals a tendency, doubtless the result of sin, and which has been manifested in every age. Transgression has formed a chasm between the creature and the Creator. It has severed man from God, and predisposed him to close ear and heart to His direct communications. These poor people in the desert felt this aversion and accounted for it as they did, in which they may have been sincere—for doubtless they analyzed not closely their own motives—and supposed, probably, that they were praising the Almighty by their humility. But the fact remains, that they had heard the commandments and were yet alive and were in no danger of dying; for God's word giveth life, and bringeth not death. Theirs was simply the spirit of the entire race that is not inclined to hear Him who is

their Lord and Father, and that essays to compliment Him by saying that He is too great to talk and they too frail to listen; and that consequently, all that they may know of Him, of themselves or duty should proceed from man. "Speak thou with us, and let not God speak with us," is at once expressive, and the repeated blunder of humanity.

Hegel refers to the prevailing egotism that, denying the possibility of knowing God, enjoys the convenient license of wandering as far as it lists in the direction of its own fancies, and we must have observed that these fancies are decidedly irreligious. Nature is a revelation of the Infinite One —

> "Every bird that sings
> And every flower that stars the elastic sod,
> And every breath the radiant summer brings,
> To the pure spirit is a word of God."

But we must have noticed how impatient the generality of men are with natural theology. To them the heavens declare the glory of the astronomer, not of the Maker; and as to the earth, it reveals the footprints of a Miller, or a Hutton, not those of the Creator. The efforts of many who claim to work in the name of science are mainly directed towards an explanation of the universe which shall render the Divine Being superfluous. Almost any theory, however gross, absurd and untenable, which claims to have accomplished this feat, will find ready and credulous upholders. The world wants man to speak, and if his puny voice can drown that of God it experiences a thrill of delight. This unhappy tendency has manifested itself in the study of morals as decidedly as in the investigation of physics. In the past, and in the present, attempts have been made to found ethics on the wisdom of man, on some theory of human devising, or of human philosophy. Epicurus sought to build a complete system on the desire for

happiness alone; the Stoics with more grandeur, but not with more success, on the abstract idea of goodness. The Utilitarians aim to establish morals on the basis of self-interest and the useful; and the Intuitionalists on an original principle of right and wrong—all of them conscientiously dispensing with the Almighty. Herbert Spencer worked earnestly, in the same direction, and an eminent ethical culturist in New York has been ridiculing the people for bowing before God—a mere myth—whereas if they desired inspiration to right-doing they had better bow to the memory of Abraham Lincoln. Many of the people with as little thought as characterized their prototypes, are crying out to these theorizers, "Speak thou with us, and let not God speak."

And yet only the voice of God, only His authority, can furnish adequate grounds for a permanent and practical ethical system. I shall not undertake an argument in defense of this position, and yet a few words may not be out of place. Sophocles, referring to the ideas of right and wrong, said, many years ago, "In highest heaven they have their birth, neither did the mortal race of man beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep; the power of God is mighty in them, and groweth not old." Kant exclaims: "Duty! wondrous thought that worketh neither by foul insinuation, flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law in the soul, and so extorting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience; before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they rebel; whence the original?" His philosophy answers—God. Such thinkers realize that the divine voice in the soul, if not in a revelation, is indispensable to goodness. They may phrase it differently, but they believe with us that morals cannot ignore religion. In those countries where successful efforts have been made to separate them

the most disastrous results have followed. France tried it, and she was overwhelmed with shame. Germany is experimenting in the same direction, and with the spread of infidelity the number of criminals has increased. What a comment on the influence of godless ethics.

When men believe that there is nothing sacred in the idea of right and wrong, that they are merely formal distinctions—the effect of education, or of slow development —is it wonderful that they should regard them as only fit to be dealt with as circumstances or pleasure may dictate? Such is the practical outcome. If man has created these distinctions, then man may surely set them at defiance; and if he is a creature of circumstances, then circumstances may be allowed to control him; and if he is a child of the devil, if there is any such disconsolate personage, he may with blamelessness serve him, as a New England transcendentalist has intimated.

May we not also ask ourselves, if, as many suppose, we are deteriorating morally, whether the retrogression is not due to a declining sense of God's supremacy as lawgiver and of His presence in modern life? Observe the multitudes as they wearily tramp over London Bridge from sunrise to sunset, or the crowds that throng the thoroughfares of New York, Paris, and Chicago; or enter the slums, the horse-show and the theatres, and it will not be easy to believe that God is in these thoughts of these people. It is difficult to imagine that they would care to have God talk with them, and many are as they are, careless, superficial, soulless, because they do not credit that He has ever spoken to any one. With what avidity do they welcome what they are pleased to regard as emancipating theories of morals, theories that eliminate the "blood and iron" from the Ten Commandments, and that relegate the precepts of our Lord to the realm of visions.

But have we deteriorated? Has the world grown worse? Can it fairly be alleged that we are not as temperate, as honest, as chivalrous, as generous, as just as our ancestors? Behold, how readily men of common mold,—policemen, firemen, sailors,—lay down their lives for others. Mark the unparalleled liberality of our millionaires, and the innumerable charitable causes, flower missions, slum missions, open-air funds, summer outings, refuges, asylums,—that excite the benevolence of the rich. The earth is full of beautiful charities, of helpful ministries, of gracious sacrifices for others, and only a slanderous pessimism would intimate that "the former days were better than these." In all the good being done, in all the bounties conferred, I rejoice; but if we are what we ought to be why is the need so great and constantly pressing, and pressing beyond the ability of charity to meet? Evidently there is something wrong. We may be better than our fathers, but with our knowledge and opportunities are we as good as we should be? While we may have advanced beyond the ethical life of the past, has our moral life kept pace with our material and political progress? There may be no real retrogression, but there may be a pause, a halt, an arrest in ethical development. Which?

Comparisons are frequently unsatisfactory and fruitless. There are and there always have been individuals who fail to see the happier and more hopeful side of their own age, and who are so enamored of the past as to be blind to its deficiencies. So, likewise, there are those who glorify their own times and hardly count it possible that a virtue should have flourished in the times that are gone. If a man is minded to be partisan it would not be difficult to make out a case favorable either to ancients or moderns.

In this connection the words of Tacitus are not amiss: "Morality, like everything else, moves round in a circle,"

eddies and retreats, swirls and moves forward. So also the wise admonition of Seneca: "We must guard against letting blame fall on our own age. This has always been the complaint of our ancestors, that manners have been corrupted, that vice reigns, that human life is deteriorating and falling into every kind of wickedness. We lament in the same strain, and our descendants will do the same after us. In reality, however, these things do not change, but only fluctuate slightly at times like the ebb and flow of the sea, now one vice prevails most and now another —but bad men have always existed and always will."

Possibly the world has only entered on one of these special seasons of "fluctuation," and to-day it may simply be making no ethical headway. Comparisons with the past would prove profitless, and might even prevent our reaching just conclusions concerning the place of morality in our age. I, therefore, press on the attention of the reader my own conviction, a conviction I desire to vindicate that endeavors may be made to remedy the evils that exist, namely:—*that the age is practically at a standstill morally, that it has not gained in righteousness as it has in knowledge, and that in virtue and right-doing it is not keeping pace with the grand march of scientific, artistic and commercial progress.*

It is most fitting that in disclosing the ground on which this contention rests, we should in a brief preliminary way determine the scope and significance of moral conduct. Schleiermacher has reduced "Ethics" to three fundamental ideas—the idea of good, the idea of virtue, the idea of duty. The first refers to the end contemplated, right, justice and the welfare of others; the second concerns the quality of the agent, his character, as Aristotle would term it; and the third, relates to the law, and the Lawgiver, the real sources of the consciousness of obligation. Paul Janet

in his "Theory of Morals" adopts the same classification, and it is sufficient for the purposes of this discussion.

Our inquiry leads us to ask whether, we do not in a purely sentimental way, perform spasmodic acts of kindness, and fail to keep steadfastly before us in our dealings the happiness and well-being of others, and whether we so regulate and govern our own soul and our daily life as to be ourselves what our deeds denote; whether we are actuated by a high sense of the solemn dignity of law and of our accountability to the Judge of all? The old Romans prided themselves on their "*fides*" in contrast with the esthetic amiability and pliability of the Greeks, and the mendacity and perfidy of the Phœnicians. What, say we, are the moderns patterning after the Romans or the Greeks? Are they ruled by the three ideas of Schleiermacher, and are they conscientiously devoted to them in the spirit of the ancient "fides," so devoted that they would themselves rather lose money and fame than bring injury and sorrow to a fellow being, or besmirch and stain their own characters, or violate, evade and degrade the law? This is the standard! How near does this generation approach it, and how deeply concerned are the people to make it the governing principle of the age?

Let us see. As the world-panorama unrolls before our eyes, the scenes enacted in the arena of national and international politics, in social and even religious affairs are not surcharged with the light of sincerity, disinterestedness, integrity and purity, and the atmosphere is laden with the foul mephitic elements of vice and conviviality. Impressive and significant the address of President Eliot a few months ago at New Haven on the moral failures of our educational system. He declared that for two generations we have been struggling with the barbarous vice of drunkenness, and with "the extraordinarily unintelligent form of

pleasurable excitement"—gambling, and have practically failed in suppressing either. To all of which he adds:

"A similar unfavourable inference concerning popular education may be drawn from the quality of the popular theatres of to-day. The popular taste is for trivial spectacles, burlesque, vulgar vaudeville, extravaganza, and melodrama, and the stage often presents to unmoved audiences scenes and situations of an unwholesome sort.

"Americans are curiously subject to medical delusions; because they easily fall victims to that commonest of fallacies *post hoc, ergo propter hoc.* They are the greatest consumers of patent medicines in the known world, and the most credulous patrons of all sorts of 'medicine men' and women, and of novel healing arts."

This serious indictment may well sober our imaginative optimists and compel them to a more reasonable estimate of the difficulties in the way of the ethical and social millennium which they announce to be at hand, "even at our very door."

A more scathing arraignment of society in its heights and depths, particularly in its heights, comes from England. Several writers have been discussing the very straightforward question: "Are We Going to the Devil?" and the *Christian Commonwealth* favors us with an admirable compendium of what has been said, and why it has been said, on this interesting though somewhat sensational inquiry.

"In the days of old the great baron had great rights and enormous powers, but he also had clearly recognized duties. He held the land, and that land was held by him for the raising of men in the first case, and for the raising of personal revenue afterwards, and all rights arose from duties that had to be duly performed. And the men to be raised were no underfed, over-worked, ill-housed laborers, but

that 'happy breed of men' eulogized by Shakespeare, who, when led by the chivalry of England, were the incomparable infantry that became the wonder and terror of the world. To-day we hear of privileges, but we hear little of duties, complain the candid social critics. The noble visits his estates for the shooting, and an agent collects his rents. His tenants in turn hire their laborers at a wage that keeps body and soul together till strength to work decays, and when too old for labor they are sent to the union. Then comes a wail of utter despair. It is declared that men without honor and women without decency are the 'gentle' of to-day; that women in the upper section look on their own degradation as a smart advertisement, and their husbands, viler still, content to know and be silent, share in the spoils."

In all Christian charity let us make allowances for the possible rhetorical fervor of the indignant critics and assume that they exaggerate the evils they describe; nevertheless, as they write as students of their times and are not preachers, we must accept their statements as worthy of some degree of consideration. Even if they are only approximately correct they furnish no reassuring picture of our position, and though we scout the idea that society either in Great Britain or the United States is going to the devil we may fairly conclude that the devil, whoever that highly gifted and melancholy personage may be, is going for society.

An English clergyman, who has for many years resided in America, observes that the last thing he would say of our people is that they are law-abiding. He is a well-informed gentleman, and doubtless his deliberate opinion is entitled to weight; but I am inclined to the view that other nations share with us this unenviable distinction. The London papers have been filled for the last two or

three years with complaints of the unbridled license and violence of the hooligans and they have been compelled to chronicle the disasters wrought by Jabez Balfour scandals, and by the miscarriage of get-rich-schemes which have involved the reputation of men notable and respected. Austria-Hungary, likewise, hardly knows what to do with its riotous mobs, and Florence and Milan have been disturbed by law-breakers. From Belgrade, stained with blood, to St. Petersburg, black with cruelty, there is a barely suppressed revolt from the reigning order whether it be good or bad. France has had its Panama rogueries and its Dreyfus outrages, its business affairs have been blackened by frauds, and its citizens have been excited to the trampling beneath their feet the safeguards of personal liberty in their mad frenzy against the Jews.

Germany also has presented the pitiable spectacle of officers in the army abusing their power, fiendishly torturing subalterns in their command, as in the case of one Bayer, who was so abused that his body was covered with hideous sores, his flesh lacerated with wounds, his hearing and eyesight both destroyed and his mental and physical condition hopelessly ruined. Another instance stands out in horrible relief, that of an officer who ran a personal friend through the body because of an imaginary affront to his rank. And now the Berlin Church Synod has been constrained to protest against the flagrant immorality of the Prussian capital. Its memorial sets forth that one marriage out of every twelve contracted in Berlin is followed by divorce. Moreover, the attention of the authorities is called to the degrading influence of the multiplying low-class variety theatres and music halls, and to the total disregard by the restaurants and liquor shops of the Sabbath, not even closing their doors during the hours devoted to divine worship.

We are as bad as others. This, I fear, cannot be disproved. We have our army excesses, as other nations have, brutal inhumanity in inflicting the so-called "water-cure" on helpless prisoners, and disgrace in exalting and crowning with honor an officer who has violated the sanctity of hospitality and taken advantage of the compassion of an enemy to betray him. And, what is particularly humiliating, comparatively few of the people are moved by the infamy of the transaction, and those who have ventured to criticise it have been denounced by some partisan newspapers as lacking in patriotism. Milton wrote—

> "This is true liberty, when free born men,
> Having to advise the public, may speak free,
> Which he who can and will deserves high praise,
> Who neither can nor will may hold his peace.
> What can be juster in a state than this,"

a passage which intemperate apologists for iniquity ought seriously to ponder.

That lawlessness is unhappily prevalent in our land there are many illustrations to prove. Complaints are not uncommon that the police in several of our larger cities frequently act without due warrant of law, making illegal arrests, entering premises without legal authority, unmercifully beating prisoners on the streets, and subjecting them to illegal methods of examination—called the "sweat box," the "third degree"—while members of the force, not a few, are themselves guilty of protecting crime and vice for the sake of the reward obtainable in the shape of "graft." Political "machines" are commonly reputed and believed to be as corrupt as the most conscienceless ward politician, and equally indifferent to Constitutional provisions and municipal ordinances. Even candidates for so responsible a position as mayor of a great city are occasionally moved

to assure the denizens of disorderly neighborhoods that if they are elected the laws will be "liberally" interpreted and administered.

Men of good repute, for the sake of office, have to seek for votes in the sewers and gutters; and every election in the United States seems to strengthen the hold that the vicious classes have on the throat of the country, as they are sought after, courted, and made to feel their importance to one or the other, and perhaps to both, of the rival parties seeking power. Worse than all, it is now charged that great corporations are so indifferent to the moral well-being of society, that for favors shown they will work to elect the very worst type of municipal rulers. Hence, on the close of a recent election a leading newspaper indulges in the following reflections:

"This community will carry over one resentment from the preelection agitation. It does not forget that the corporations operating public franchises did all they could in the campaign just ended to help a ticket that stood for the misgovernment of the city and the debauching of the people. They did it openly, in cynical contempt of the sentiment that took just offense at their interference. . . . But for the corporations the line of good government in this city might have been unbroken from 1895 to 1905. They nominated one Mayoralty candidate in 1897 and elected another. They have always been on the side of bad government. The strongest single force for evil in this community is not the pitiful band of dive-keepers, or the petty barons of pool and policy, but the respectable gentlemen who direct the affairs of the surface, elevated, subway and suburban railroads, and the gas and electric light corporations—men, some of them, who figure in the functions of exclusive society, and are cited as 'representative New Yorkers.'"

Again, making allowance for overstatement, these confident assertions, taken with reserve, bring to light a condition of things that must be sapping the foundations of virtue, and which, if true, will ultimately produce a revulsion of feeling in favor of abolishing private ownership of public utilities.

We need only touch on the frequent lynchings in various portions of the land; the alarming increase and growing facility of divorce; the development in some quarters of semi-slavery in labor camps as cruel and devilish as the chattel slavery of old; and the astounding extension of adulteration in nearly every line of goods, with the deplorable revelations of fiduciary trickery in leading monetary circles, to convince that as a people we are making no perceptible advance in morals.

A contemporary writer has been calling attention to the honesty that pervades the modern business world, and in proof of his contention cites the prompt way in which merchants meet their obligations with each other, and the readiness of guarantee companies to insure the integrity of those who occupy positions of trust. I am not challenging the uprightness of the major part of those who engage in commercial pursuits. Still I would not have appealed to the guarantee companies in support of my confidence, whose very existence implies distrust and the need that is felt for every precaution being taken against *probable* peculation and embezzlement. But in forming a sound judgment on this point it is for us to reconcile if we can some current business methods with any just standard of right and wrong, whether formulated by philosopher or preacher, by Confucius, Zarathustra, Buddha, or Jesus Christ.

When capital combines, and for the sake of obtaining a monopoly employs threats and trickery to drive small competitors from business and deprive them of their means of

livelihood; or when it over-capitalizes enormously and out of all proportion to real values, and through the influence of great financial names issues stocks which are purely fantastic investments of no worth, and when the day of reckoning comes with smug satisfaction the great financiers rejoice that the water is being squeezed out which they poured in, while their own bonds are dry and safe; or when advantage is taken of the ignorant, and when the money of widows and poor people is swallowed up by corporations, building loan companies, and other fair promising organizations, by what system of ethics can these measures be vindicated? They cannot be adjusted to the teachings of the slave Epictetus, neither can they be harmonized with the moral maxims of Marcus Aurelius. Plato would scorn them. Aristotle would denounce them, and no heathen writer of repute would advocate them in a treatise on casuistry. To imagine, therefore, that they can be reconciled with the moral precepts of Christ is a most tremendous assumption as gratuitous as it is insulting.

It may be answered: These and other heathen sanctioned worse things than are countenanced to-day. It may be so, though I am not sure of it. But this is to beg the question. I am not arguing that we are less honorable than our sires and more corrupt in our dealings, neither am I contending that we have not advanced in sentimentality, in philanthropy and the esthetic way of doing questionable acts—for we are surely less coarse, brutal and vulgar—but, and this only, that we have not levelled up ethically with our educational advantages, our religion and our manifold opportunities for knowing and doing what is right and just.

I have kept in the background what must be apparent to every observer that we in America, and in Europe as well, have become more luxurious in our tastes, more

indulgent in our treatment of society scandals, more lavish in our expenditures on fashionable foibles, more inclined to tolerate dram drinking in women, more favorably disposed to the less elevating and less desirable forms of theatrical entertainment, and more, far more than in the past, given over to the pursuit of pleasurable amusement. To which, indeed, we are in cities so frenetically devoted that serious attention to serious things is increasingly harder to gain; yes, so devoted that a representative of the dramatic profession said a few days ago that the stage had greater power over the people than the pulpit. I am not prepared to admit the tenableness of this statement. It may be in New York that the theatre is more influential than the church. That is for those more familiar with its affairs than I am to determine. If it is so, various mischievous tendencies in the life of the metropolis are easily explicable; and if it is so the deepest solicitude may well be felt for its ethical future. I am, however, satisfied that the theatre is not as potent throughout the land as the gentleman referred to imagines, and I am indulging the hope that in our cities also for the credit of the citizens generally its alleged supremacy may speedily cease.

Solemn is the responsibility of the church universal at this juncture. She is the duly accredited leader in morals, and no halt can occur in ethical progress without reflecting on her efficiency or faithfulness. When the advance of an army is checked the authorities hold the chief officer in command primarily accountable. Some degree of blame may rest on his subordinates; but he is not permitted to skulk behind their failure. He must answer for himself. The same rule applies to the captain of a vessel when the voyage miscarries or the ship is lost, and it governs in cabinets, in political parties and in all other great human

interests where generalship is indispensable. Nor will the community exempt the church from its operation.

She claims to be the representative of God Almighty and to be influenced continually by His spirit—the spirit of righteousness. On earth she is the only organism that claims to be directly related to the Infinite One and to be His dwelling-place, the seat of His authority and the mouthpiece of His law. Her mission, however apprehended, is distinctly ethical. If it is viewed as a redemption, it is a redemption from sin, and if as a government among men it is the government of purity, right and justice. She is, therefore, in the world to make the world morally better, and she must in a measurable degree be held responsible if the improvement is not apparent and continuous. I am not intimating that blame does not exist elsewhere. That is conceded. But her obligation cannot be ignored. This is her supreme business. She is on earth for this very purpose. Has she herself deteriorated as a moral teacher? Has she become nerveless or apathetic? Shall the commander of an army on which hangs the nation's honor be held to a strict account, and shall not the church on whose faithfulness depends the nation's ethical life be required to give an account of her stewardship?

I am afraid it must be admitted that the church has not preserved the confidence of society as a moral leader. Her own character has been so deformed by ethical inconsistencies that her message on behalf of right is not received with the respect it intrinsically deserves. Again, I protest against a wrong meaning being attached to my words. I am not saying that the church is not as righteous as in former times. Purposely I am leaving such comparisons out of this discussion, if for no other reasons, at least for this, that I have found ministers and laymen,

whenever the deficiencies of the church have been exposed, ready to apologize for her on the ground that she is not as corrupt and infirm as she was one or two hundred years ago. And when this plea is put forth hope of present improvement comes to an end. It is usually uttered with such intensity of satisfaction as indicates that there is back of it no deep feeling that immediate reform is really necessary. Therefore, I am not willing the vital issue should be obscured in this way by instituting useless comparisons. Let the church cease comparing herself with herself, and compare herself with what she ought to be and with what God's Word represents her as designed to be, and if she is candid, she will confess that she is very far from the ideal, so far as seriously to impair her moral influence over society.

When a great religious community during a municipal election, which was preeminently ethical in its character, could stand apart in silence and never once by its priests in public lift up its voice against corruption and vice, society ought not to be too harshly judged if it concludes that this professed teacher of morals has departed from its vocation. When this same community also permits its members, without protest, to engage in Jew-baiting in Paris, and when it preserves discreet, though not very chivalrous, neutrality as Spain oppresses the Cubans and devastates with fire and sword the Philippines, and only raises its voice in remonstrance when it fears for its own property under the United States flag in the Archipelago, the busy world may be excused if it shrugs its shoulders and exclaims that ecclesiastical organizations are not different from others—more interested in their temporal possessions than they are in the cause of liberty and justice.

It is usually said in extenuation that the Roman Catholic Church is not in politics. This is an absurdity. She is

so deeply immersed in politics that she contends for the restoration of her temporal power in Italy, and there foments civic dissensions if not actual violence. In France and Germany she is allied with certain political parties favorable to her interests, and in the United States she is as much a political wire-puller as elsewhere. It is true she is rarely in politics for ethical purposes; but invariably for ecclesiastical advantages. This is not to her credit. Concerning her relations with earthly governments I have no desire to say a word. That is for her chiefs to decide and lies apart from the scope of this discussion. But if she fails in her ethical mission the whole community suffers, and that she does fail, notwithstanding her high talk, is evident and is one of the most discouraging signs of the times. This is not said in a hostile spirit; but only that she and the community at large may perceive why these times of ours are morally stationary.

Nor are Protestants blameless. They may not err in the same way as the Catholics, but they have their own shortcomings, and enough of them to impair their influence for good and goodness. This is not a sectarian issue. It is not one section of the Christian world against the other. Both are to blame, both neglectful, both fail at that point where the interest of society in them begins. In saying this I am not saying that the type of personal ethical life in these religious communities is not vastly superior to what it is outside. I am only maintaining that in the aggregate it is not what it ought to be, and is not sufficiently distinct to be the potent factor it ought to be in the moral development of mankind. Why should the world be expected to sit at the feet of the church to learn from her the principles of right and to receive from her inspiration to holy living, when she rarely utters a word of condemnation against commercial greed and other abuses

which are undermining the integrity of the country, and when she countenances in her members what is manifestly foreign to the Christian ideal. Think what it signifies when Rev. Dr. Rainsford is constrained to say on this subject:

"The drama has fallen to terrible depths. Zangwill has been criticised for his opinion of the stage. Things have got so far in this city that plays that no young people, or, for that matter, old people either, ought to see, are crowded. Our eyes are morally astigmatic. Of one such play I heard of one young man of the church who said, 'Well, it don't hurt me.' What are you going to do when a Christian man says that? What has that to do with the question? Is he sent into the world, is he baptized, to save his own skin?"

It is this "astigmatism" that now unfits the church for moral leadership. She is not clear in her ethical discernment. She is confused in her judgment on questions of right and wrong. Her intention may be well enough and she may desire to help mankind, but she does not always have singleness of eye to see the highroad of duty. She is perpetually stumbling. At times she adopts methods for securing financial aid which degrade, and every now and then betrays belief in the theory that the end sanctifies the means. Or in her internal management, for the sake of peace, she leans on men of no business uprightness, and calls on men to pray for divine guidance in grave crises whom she knows to be destitute of sincerity and honor. Meannesses are tolerated for the "sake of the cause," she not perceiving that a cause dependent for its support on meanness of any kind is not worth preserving. In some congregations,—let us hope their number is small—the moral sense is so defective, that the members may with impunity attend debasing shows, may neglect church and

transact business on Sunday, may without serious fear of being called to account slander, backbite, and adopt in church elections the tricky arts of the cheap politician.

These statements are not disclosures. They are not new and sensational revelations. They are matters of common notoriety. The community is familiar with them. They are talked about on the streets and are the theme of conversation among all classes of people. In some form or other they find their way into the press and furnish rich material for the satire of essayist and novelist. It is because they are known and cannot be hidden that the moral message of the church has lost in a marked degree its authoritative note for the age ; and not until she realizes this, and "judgment begins at the house of God," have we reason to expect that the present *impasse* will end and ethical progress be quickened.

Martin Luther once prayed: "Oh, my God, punish rather with pestilence, with all the terrible sicknesses on earth, with war, with anything rather than that Thou be silent to us." A noble petition surely ; and were it the supplication of the people generally they would now perceive that He has been speaking to the world in the past and is still speaking to the race. The difficulty to-day is, not that God has gone dumb, but that He has few hearers. If we will open the ear of the soul, the "still, small voice" will be audible within saying: "This is the way, walk ye in it."

This is not some far-fetched figure of speech to which there is no corresponding reality. It does not express a theory or even a faith—it is a fact and one that recent psychology has been attempting to explain. The newer philosophy is writing: "Reverence thyself; for in thyself alone is the message of God." Amiel said in his published Reflections: "The transference of Christianity

from the region of history to the region of pyschology is the task of our epoch." And we gather from Mr. Balfour[1] the direction of modern thought when he says: "Morality is discerned as a part of the social order, because involved in the constitution of humanity itself. And there the unique character of man's moral judgments has been clearly disengaged as the very centre and essence of his life: . . . and that good which he recognizes as having authority over him is seen to be no other than the reflection in his own soul of the infinite purpose which enspheres all our being."

Then the "infinite purpose" is disclosed to man in the solitudes of his soul. "In thyself is the message of God." These writers may mean differently in a sense from what I mean when I declare that God yet talks with man. They may be thinking of some natural endowment, the law written on the heart, while I, without denying this, am thinking of a natural aptitude; but we all believe that there is or may be within that which illuminates the path of duty. With the form of their thought I have no present controversy. I am only anxious to convince men that others than preachers of the gospel believe that such communion with the Infinite is possible and results in clearness of ethical perception and in an overmastering appreciation of ethical obligation.

When this is more generally apprehended, when it takes hold of the deeps of our being, when the church and serious people everywhere reverse the entreaty of the Hebrews and pray that God will speak with them and in them that they may not perish of moral sores and putrefactions, then the day will not tarry when righteousness will revive and when, as written from of old, shall be fulfilled the promise:

[1] "Foundations of Belief."

"With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. . . . And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

VIII

THE POSITION AND PERIL OF PROTESTANTISM

"O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified? This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit are ye now perfected in the flesh? Did ye suffer so many things in vain? if it be indeed in vain."—*Galatians 3: 1–4.*

THE "anathema" pronounced in the opening paragraphs of this Epistle on man or angel who should preach any other than Christ's gospel sounds peculiarly harsh proceeding from the lips of him who composed the most eloquent eulogy on charity extant.

Likewise, the strong invectives employed by Christ in reproving the Pharisees do not appeal to us as harmonizing with His character as incarnate love. Both teachers must indeed have been strangely moved to use language so foreign to their nature. Was this seeming contradiction designed to teach us that intense feeling against wrong, growing into fierce denunciation, is a higher mark of solicitude for the well-being of mankind than the cynical apathy that beholds with amused contempt the slow disintegration of religious beliefs? Better, surely, the hottest fires of indignant intolerance than the glacial indifference of liberalism, whose atmosphere is fatal to conviction in thought and to heroism in deed, and which, like icebergs in the Atlantic, generates dense fogs where unmelodious whistles tell shrilly of danger and of a necessary slowing up of the engines. For where nothing is really cherished

as truth, every available moment will be taken in proclaiming the certainty of uncertainty, and in such a vacuum spiritual energy cannot be maintained, neither can spiritual life be begotten.

Nevertheless, we in our day in our burning zeal for the just and the true—if we have it,—need not imitate apostolic example in our speech. What beings divine or inspired may say by virtue of their absolute knowledge we had better not attempt to copy. Not for us to call down fire from heaven, and not for us to "handle Jove's dread thunderbolts." Not one of us is infallible, not even the pope, and neither he nor we should presume to invoke any of the one hundred and thirty-five curses decreed by the Council of Trent on those who differ from us. We should seriously, steadfastly and stalwartly uphold the faith of our fathers—our faith—and be intolerant of impurity, of dishonesty and of insincerity and trifling with things sacred, without being vituperative in speech, or calling to our aid the imprecatory psalms.

What roused the ire of St. Paul was the unexpected and sudden readiness of the Galatian Christians to depart from the gospel as it had been originally promulgated among them about seven years earlier than the date of this letter, and welcomed by them with every sign of high appreciation. They had allowed themselves to be bewitched; they were falling back on positions abandoned by them only a little while before; they were turning aside from the true law of progress, and in their foolishness they were jeopardizing every spiritual advantage that had been gained. No wonder that he was intensely moved and righteously indignant, for not only was Christianity, then in its infancy, imperilled, but the future of religion in the world, which involved the moral and social happiness of mankind, was being recklessly compromised.

Can it be in our age that there is reason for the renewal of this solicitude and need for the repetition of these remonstrances? After not seven years but two thousand, and after four hundred years since the Reformation, can it be that Christian communities, particularly Protestant communities, which more closely than others resemble those of apostolic times, are being "bewitched," are forgetting the past, are falling into errors from which they were rescued by Luther, and are, not only losing their own distinctive character, but also imperilling the spiritual heritage of unborn generations?

Prof. Adolf Harnack thinks that there are grounds for taking a discouraging view of the situation. In his widely circulated lectures on the subject he writes: "To use the language of commerce, the old Protestant house is still certainly a going concern, but in the course of history, as we know, houses have a way of degenerating." He traces in a masterly fashion the signs of present degeneracy in the reform churches, and other students have called attention to various indications that Protestant stability and supremacy are gravely threatened.

I am not pessimistically inclined, and yet I admit there is enough in these signs and in the trend of things to arouse serious thought. It would be foolishness to ignore the tokens of decay and denounce these faithful friends who honestly criticise as merely prophets of evil delighting in uttering messages of evil. My own impression is that these danger signals are warranted, only instead of leading to despair they should constrain us to change our course. They are wholesome and needed warnings that should be promptly heeded, and not necessarily the ominous foreshadows of a disaster that cannot be avoided.

Believing this, and following to a certain degree St. Paul's representations in my text, I desire to consider the present

Position and Peril of Protestantism

However dark the Protestant outlook may be, it ought to be said, as we enter on this discussion, that it is not primarily due to the machinations and successes of its famous antagonist. There is a vague impression abroad that Roman Catholicism has made such progress of late as hopelessly to distance and almost discredit the reform faith. This, however, is a mistake. The increase of the Roman Church is purely that of birth, not of conquest and conversion. It has not in the last century regained a single principality lost in the Reformation, and in various Catholic countries its power has sensibly declined. Taken all over the world, it has barely held its own, if on the whole it has not lost ground. Let us not forget that Lamenais forsook the Romish communion to follow "new political ideals," or that Renan was driven by the unhistoric Christ of ecclesiology to create a sentimental Christ of romance; while more recently the Abbé Bourrier, the Abbé Charbonnel, the Curé of Arabaux, M. Vidalot, and a host of other clerics have abandoned the altars of the Papal hierarchy. Neither should we forget that Guibert, an authority, has stated that in France "it is becoming more and more difficult to fill the vacant places in the priesthood"; or that Joseph Müller has reported that 18,000 persons in Prussia passed during the year 1895 from the Roman Catholic to the Protestant fold, and that in Saxony twenty-five per cent. of the children of mixed marriages enter the latter enclosure.

It is also frequently overlooked that the success of Prussia in the field against Austria, July 3, 1866, at Königgrätz determined the balance of political power in favor of the Protestants on the Continent. Nor has the loss of prestige been compensated by the gains made in

England and America. With all that has been done through the Oxford movement and the secession of Newman, the Catholics of England number only a trifle over a million. Dr. Dorchester has shown that they are also relatively losing ground in Canada, and that in the United States the increase of Roman Catholics has not equalled the number of Catholic immigrants from beyond the sea.

I am not undervaluing the significance of what the Roman Church has done, neither am I belittling her power. I am also far from advocating indifference to her encroachments, particularly when she is now consolidating her various societies into a compact organization for the purpose of securing to her larger political influence,—the one supreme thing, and valued by her more than any other possession, for which she exists and strives. But I am not prepared to admit, in view of these facts, that to her belongs either the glory or the shame for whatever of decline has overtaken Protestantism, or for whatever of danger now threatens its institutions and principles. Her own position, as shown by these proofs, is far from being secure and satisfactory, and were we admitted to her inner councils we would, I am sure, be startled by her own misgivings.

A church which in her highest Conclave is dominated by the veto of an Austrian Emperor, whose martyred wife preferred exile to his royal affection; a church that is distracted by political intrigues in the Vatican, and while anxious to rule America is distrustful of Americanism in her clergy; a church that has excited the hostility of the greatest Republic in Europe—France, and has retarded the unity and prosperity of Italy; a church that has no past glorified by deeds of renown on behalf of liberty and enlightenment, and no future free from humiliations and anxieties; and a church that "has had twenty centuries in which to establish that universal spiritual empire which

its advocates assert to be its destiny and no such empire has yet been established," [1] is not strong enough, and never has been to rear an effective obstruction in the way of Protestant progress. "The great masters of modern literature, from Goethe until now—and who are our spiritual teachers if not they?—are on the whole, alien from Catholicism, if not opposed to it. Who of us can doubt that the great masters are likely to remain alien from Catholicism, as the word has hitherto been understood?"

Such being the case, why, then, from a church out of touch with the highest intellectual life of the times there never can have been much to fear, and she ought not to be held responsible for the shortcomings and failures of Protestantism. Indeed, if there is one object more pathetically tragical than the weakness, hesitancy and decline of Protestantism, it is the empty and impotent pomp, parade and pretense of the Roman Catholic Church, proudly announcing assumptions of supremacy founded on ancient fabrications, while in her dependence and feebleness she is courting the favor of liberty on this side of the Atlantic, and is quite prepared to play off Orleanist, Bourbon or Napoleon against republican freedom on the other.

To understand the real peril of Protestantism we must consider its present position doctrinally.

The apostle reproves the Galatians for faithlessness to the presentation of Christ which had commanded their believing homage at the beginning. He declares that Jesus had been openly set forth before them as the crucified One; and the verb seems to mean "painted," that is, portrayed. They had not been taught a sentimental, emotional religion, but a religion grounded in history and challenging inquiry and thought. Consequently, he asks whether they

[1] "Quest of Faith," p. 161. Bailey Saunders.

had received the Spirit by the *works* of the law or by the *hearing*, meaning probably the *message* of faith? Evidently *hearing* must have reference to some truth or teaching inculcated. As those to whom he wrote had never seen the Lord actually nailed to the tree we must understand this language as we do the phrase "preaching Christ and Him crucified," as denoting a doctrinal conception. His complaint is that the Gentiles had lost sight of this conception, and were substituting for it what he terms "the works of the law." What he really means by the latter expression we need not discuss here. Let it suffice that he condemned the tendency to belittle the intellectual element in the life of the church, clear ideas, tenaciously held regarding divine things being vital to her existence.

His solicitude is as fully warranted now as then. Professor Harnack has pointed out that a notable decline has taken place in appreciation for what used to be regarded as vital to Protestantism—*The Theologia Sacra*. What he means by the phrase is, that, whereas at the beginning there were only prophecy and spiritual teaching, on the passing of the age of inspiration, a coherent and systematic effort was made to embody the content of revelation in something like dogmatic forms. These forms were related and were named theology, and the theology was termed "sacred" as it was professedly derived from the Bible, mainly if not exclusively. Before the rise of the Lutheran Reformation doctrinal decline had become a marked feature of the Roman Church. While many learned mediæval doctors yet cherished what has been called "the supreme science" it had very generally been thrust aside and had given place to superstitious rites, to childish legends and worldly policies. Theology had fallen into disrepute. The vast and glorious truths of revelation were rarely discussed, and in proportion as light died out in the school and pulpit

skepticism increased, corruption and violence spread, and Dr. Dollinger with a scholar's frankness acknowledges that a reformation was imperatively demanded.

The Reformation came in due time and it began in the domain of thought. Old Protestantism reenthroned theology, and seasons of spiritual refreshing, of moral cleansing and evangelistic conquests followed. The Bible was translated and given to the people; the great doctrine of justification by faith was proclaimed from Rome to Wittenberg, from Wittenberg to Zurich, and from Zurich throughout the Catholic world; and confessions were drawn up and the preparation of systems of divinity occupied the attention of the most learned and consecrated men. I am not approving these systems as though they were all that could be desired, for I believe that every age ought to shape and write its own theology. I am only pointing out the fact that they characterized the earlier stages of the Reformation, that they produced a radical change in the religious and ethical life of the age, and that probably at no time will there be a spiritual quickening apart from intense intellectual activity.

This I am inclined to believe the Protestantism of to-day needs to re-learn. What took place in the church before the memorable upheaval in the sixteenth century, and earlier in Galatia, has been repeating itself, and with the same deadly results. *The Theologia Sacra* has lost its hold on the world and measurably on the pulpit. There are clergymen who pride themselves on not being doctrinal preachers, and while scientists are striving to be more and more specific, synthetic and philosophical, they apparently desire to be less definite, constructive and comprehensive. Much of a vague and flowery kind is written of the "Christ that is to be," of "creedless piety," "advanced thought" —usually a misnomer, as it ought rather to be phrased

"advanced feeling"—and "light and sweetness." On secular topics most of these pulpits have much to say and to say dogmatically, but on their special business the tongue falters and hesitates and weakly attempts to hide the uncertainty of indifference by declaiming against theology.

Not a few members of the Church have drifted into the same untenable position. They also prefer ministers who refrain from doctrine, and who occupy themselves and others with "light and sweetness," and apparently more with "sweetness" than "light." While they are thus deluding themselves, are imagining that the outside world has been stricken with intellectual paralysis, and that it can be won to the support of a Christianity that ignores the great mysteries of the faith, sanctuaries are neglected, and literature disposes of the grave issues which it treats so superficially, if at all, in this abrupt and heroic fashion:

"The government of the world must not be considered as determined by an extra-mundane intelligence, but one immanent in the cosmical forces and their relations."

"Science has gradually taken all the positions of the childish belief of the peoples, it has snatched thunder and lightning from the hands of the gods. The stupendous powers of the Titans of the olden times have been grasped by the fingers of men."

> "I find no hint throughout the universe
> Of good or ill, of blessings or of curse;
> I find alone, necessity supreme:
> The world rolls round forever like a mill,
> It grinds out death and life, and good and ill;
> It has no purpose, heart, or mind or will."

Thus while many of us in the pulpit speak slightingly of dogmatics, the outside community is slowly elaborating a

theology of its own, and not until we abandon our misleading animadversions and return to the example of the first reformers will Protestantism resume its hold on the attention and allegiance of the nations.

Already Romanism has mastered this lesson. Indeed, she began to learn it very soon after Luther's appearance. However she may have neglected theology in times immediately preceding the Reformation, she has long ago rectified her error. She is now dogmatic and precise in her beliefs. Of late she has reproved Protestants for their critical attitude towards the Bible, and has become the warm defender of inspiration. Nor has she hesitated to impose new articles of faith on her children, such as the Immaculate Conception, and her particular interpretations of scientific facts. Recall the controversy between Cardinal Vaughan and Professor Mivart. When Protestants are definite and constructive, the world frequently describes them as bigoted and narrow. But it keeps mute in presence of the greater rigidity and inflexibility of Romanism. Yet she compels her members to subscribe to the doctrine of the mass, to the infallibility of the pope, and to her official views of the universe.

Why Protestants should be regarded as narrow because they demand subscription to the Divinity of Christ and the Atonement, and the Catholics broad because they maintain the vicegerency of the pope, I defy any one to explain. The difference between them really is that the dogmas emphasized by Rome do nothing for the invigoration of popular thought, while those that have been held by Protestantism have developed strength of mind and weight of character. To depart from them, to fail to discuss them, to leave the impression that they are unimportant, is to foster a weakness fatal to the progress of faith. Moreover, it is my opinion from all I can learn, that Rome is more dogmatic

now than at any previous period. She may not enter into the larger questions of theology, but she has something to be believed, and *it is believed*, hence she is of greater power than when she was dominated by the genius of Leo X, and the æsthetic, humanistic party. She has learned her lesson. The reform churches seem to be unlearning theirs, and the more they eloquently talk about liberality, and all things being equally unimportant, the more will they lose their grip on virile humanity, for, once convince the world that there is really nothing to be believed, and the world will take them at their word, and will believe nothing, and do nothing.

I am not claiming that theology ought to remain stationary, or that as it was it can longer be entirely accepted. But I need not remind you that the difference in effect of *no* theology and an enlightened theology is very great. Ought we not to have the courage of our dissent from the past, and re-write theology in the terms of modern life and of enlightened criticism of the New Testament text? What I protest against is the seeming impression that we can get along without a theology. This is a mistake. We will either have one framed by atheism or fanaticism, or by the consecrated scholarship of the church. At present, men argue that the church seems to have no distinct message. She appears to crave applause for being liberal rather than for being thoughtful and faithful. In these circumstances they infer that there cannot be anything very wrong in their being indifferent themselves, or much to be censured in their worldly temper. This is a peril. Unless it is realized, Protestantism will either remain stationary or retrograde. She is the religion of thought, of intellect, of dogmatic conviction, and she will slowly disintegrate unless she is true to her essential character.

Nor will the adoption of an historic creed to be repeated

each Sunday serve to avert the danger. It is not dead formularies that will save Protestantism, but living, present day thought. Harnack has called attention to the existing anomaly—that with the depreciation of theology there has arisen a new appreciation of creeds, particularly those named "Apostles" and "Nicene." Dr. Schaff claims that they are to-day the common doctrinal bond of union between the three great branches of Christendom—the Greek, the Latin and the Evangelical. They are read in congregations that are neither prelatical nor ritualistic, but as far as I can judge they fail to revive religious activity. The alleged power of these formulas to unify is also discredited by the fact that they are alike acknowledged by the divided church, and the church remains divided. The position of old Protestantism, as set forth by Harnack, was that creeds were temporary and must be prepared to undergo alteration with increased light on the Bible. They protested against finalities, at least as binding, for they held that these symbols should be believed, not merely proclaimed. But to-day the Apostles' Creed is repeated by multitudes whose mental attitute towards it is not of faith. Some go through it without any suspicion of its meaning, while others join in it as a condescension to the weakness of the unemancipated, and yet others read into it their peculiar views. This course is fatal to mental honesty and mental vigor. By substituting it for theological study and discussion, nothing is evidently gained in the way of unity, and much is lost in the way of conviction and ingenuousness. When society sees that the reform churches are trifling both with the word and the thought, the inference will be swift that they can no longer be trusted, and they will be treated with increasing disrespect.

The comprehension of the peril of Protestantism calls for inquiry into its present position spiritually.

In the text St. Paul uses two terms that are of frequent occurrence in the epistles—"spirit," "flesh." They seem to derive their essential meaning from the heavenly and earthly sides of man's nature. There is the "mind of the flesh," and the "works of the flesh," and "the carnal" or fleshly ordinances. The Galatian Christians ought to have outgrown these things. They had been renewed by the Holy Ghost, and were in a position to judge the relative unimportance of the formal and objective religion from which they had been delivered. Instead of this through the influence of false teachers, they were disposed to return to the narrow, carnal system, imagining it possible that having begun in the spirit they could be perfected in the flesh, as though a student in college were to expect mental development by resuming his place in the common school, or an advanced musician and artist were to abandon Wagner or Turner and go back to piano forte finger exercises or elementary lines in drawing. St. Paul rudely dispels the illusion. He characterizes those who hold it as "foolish" and as "bewitched," for they ought to have discerned with greater clearness the true law of progress—"first that which is natural and afterwards that which is spiritual." This law the Gentiles were reversing, they were really exalting the body above the soul, circumcision above renewal, bondage above freedom, and the worship of the Temple, with its gross limitations, above the worship portrayed by Jesus, which needs neither Jerusalem nor Gerizim and calls for no smoking altar, no bedizened priest and no bleeding sacrifice.

The original Protestantism, like primitive Christianity, was preeminently spiritual. It was not at first inclined towards rites, outward observances and dependence on the "arm of flesh." Having broken with Romanism, it had no desire to imitate Romanism, neither did it care to copy

the government or profess the peculiar Catholicism of Romanism. Worship was simplified, the mass was rejected, the priest was set aside, and the reformers began to live the life that is hid with Christ in God. Doubtless the consciousness of this divine life became the source of power, and made the Luthers, Melancthons, Carlstadts, the Hubmeyers and their sympathizers, the men they were. They trusted God and their hearts throbbed with a sense of overcoming strength through Him. Neither the works of the flesh in the form of state or social patronage, nor in the guise of pompous hierarchies appealed to them. They took God at His word and according to His promise, as Luther did at Worms, and they were mighty because they could do no other. With Paul Gerhardt they were accustomed to say, "Is God for me, then let all else oppose me!" and they freely declared—"The Word alone must do it."

This was the first stage. There were days of conflict and conquest. Then Protestantism had not learned to compromise, to talk softly, and walk prudently, to measure nicely her sentences, and with "bated breath and whispering humbleness" to announce her message in the ears of princes and kings, or secretly proclaim her emancipating social gospel for the joy of peasants and craftsmen. She was free, independent, outspoken, at times a little rough, but always brave-hearted and ready for the bloody struggles that lay before her in the thirty years war and in all the monstrous persecutions which decimated the Waldenses and almost crushed the Huguenots. There were fierce moments when she retaliated in kind and "thinking of the slaughtered saints" on the Italian hills, returned blow for blow. One half her energy in these days, a tithe of her conviction, devotion and downright way of maintaining her cause, minus every element of coarseness or violence,

would restore her and more than restore her to the confidence and admiration of the world.

Unhappily in this last stage of Protestantism there are dilettante adherents who go in for roundabout methods, who are unwilling to meet grave issues in a straightforward way, who falter in their speech when called on for a direct confession of their faith, who entertain the strangest and most ridiculous dread of Romanism, and who are so colorless, timid and neutral in their faith that the service they render is too perfunctory to be of any social or other kind of value. Were it otherwise, were they as soulful and heroic as were the early reformers, the Reformation would be more like what it was at the beginning and in a little while the earth would be filled with the renown of its beneficent victories.

Failing in this, and having declined from confidence in the Spirit, Protestants, as foolish as the Galatians before them, are returning to the works of the flesh. German students have been pointing out a tendency among non-Romanists in various lands towards sacerdotalism and priestcraft. As the primitive disciples to whom the apostle wrote were retracing their steps and going back to Jewish ordinances and Jewish ecclesiasticisms, so now these descendants of the reformers are retreating from the high spirituality of their fathers and are imagining that a partial return to sacramentarianism, with its showy impressiveness and hierarchical government, with its discipline, would restore their waning power and prestige.

Their expectation I am convinced in every respect is vain. The thoughtful world has outgrown these sensuous substitutes for personal religion. It may look with wonder on stately processionings, and bow before ecclesiastical magnates, and even submit to superstitious ceremonies, but its wonder is not unmixed with scorn, its reverence not un-

mixed with mockery, and its submission with inward shame and rebellion. Has it never occurred to these admirers of Romanism, that if the Papal system at its best and in its home in Italy, Austria and France is as unpopular as it is, and fails as it does to command the respectful homage of thoughtful people, we cannot reasonably expect its imitation to avert the religious crisis in England and America, and make Christianity more acceptable to the community?

The unchurched multitudes are not clamoring for revived splendor in worship, or for sacerdotal and sacramentarian mysteries. No, the craving for pomp, show, high altars and decorations is mainly confined to the members and particularly to the clergy of some Protestant churches. It is a movement within religious circles, and only to a limited extent without. The world has no special desire for it; and many in the churches favor it because it gratifies their mediæval tastes—and, then, it is so much easier to go through certain priestly acts than it is to teach, and to inspire by personal character and labor. But whoever relies on these performances to improve the present religious situation is the victim of infatuation. It is impossible that any great gain can come from them. We may wrangle about "orders" and "successions," we may talk sepulchrally about "altars" and the "tremendous mystery of the Eucharist," we may turn our backs on the people when we pray, and we may cross ourselves and keep holy-days—but it will all be relatively useless.

It is not possible to reverse the law that is involved in the apostle's reproof. Having commenced in the spirit, Protestants no more than Galatians can be perfected in the flesh; they can neither perfect their own religious life by going back to what has been long ago superseded, nor perfect their influence over the outside world.

In the meanwhile they are imperilling the Protestant

cause. These cheap and garish attempts at catholicizing the reform faith are construed by observers as evidences of waning confidence in its vigor. They are looked on as attempts by paint and draperies to conceal the actual cracks in the walls and the dilapidation in roof-trees and ceilings of the old house. Catholic priests are smiling at these efforts, and point to them as signs that the Protestant building is in the final stages of decay, and use them as proof that the time has arrived for all who desire religion to return to the so-called mother church. The large intelligent element among both the classes and the masses regard this singular mimicry, this dubious parody and paraphrase of a superstitious sacerdotalism long ago discredited and rejected, as a confession of weakness and despair. The new era has been searching for a religion abreast with its intelligence, veracious, real, actual, not given over to myths, legends and the glittering robes and sacred sumptuosities of ancient Paganism, and it politely derides a policy that bears a semblance to a revival of that which the clearer thought of humanity has discarded.

Yet further and finally to perceive the peril of Protestantism it is necessary that we view its present position historically.

The apostle is surprised that the Galatians should so soon have forgotten the past. "Did ye suffer so many things in vain?" is his pathetic inquiry. Do you no longer remember what it cost in suffering, in heroic self-denial, and in the loss of goods and social standing that the faith of Christ might crown your lives with blessing? If you have no vivid recollection of these things then your conduct is explicable. Little store will we lay by anything that is taken as a matter of course, the price by which it was secured being unappreciated and its intrinsic worth being underestimated. Naturally if slight importance is

attached to sacrifices, not much will be thought of the benefits they gained, and these benefits will be held loosely and will be tossed aside carelessly when the time of testing comes.

To-day many Protestants, if not Protestantism itself, are in a forgetful mood. They seem to have become oblivious to the past, not only to its terrible conflicts, but to its lessons. In their infatuation they are playing with sharp-edged tools and apparently do not recall the days when they cut, slashed and slew soul as well as body, nor think that they are capable of doing so again. To all such Protestants may I not earnestly address the apostle's remonstrance: "Have ye, and your sires suffered in the days gone by so many things in vain?" Or, to vary the question, "From what you know of the past and of the sacrifices offered for the triumph of Protestantism, is that for which this faith stands worth being transmitted to the future?"

There is a considerable number of extremists in reform prelatical communions who have grown dissatisfied with the distinction—"Protestant"—and who would substitute for it the name "Catholic." They seem pitiably anxious to be counted a section of the Greek and Latin hierarchies whose crimes against human freedom are sufficient to render them both odious. Has the story of the Lollards and the Huguenots been effaced from memory, and the recent atrocities committed by orthodox Russia against Hebrews and Roscalnics (Nonconformists), Stundists, Chlysty and others been so easily forgotten? If not, why so eager to appear one with them by renouncing the great name "Protestant," associated as it is with the march of freedom, the emancipation of the intellect, the progress of enlightenment and the development of material prosperity?

I have not the least desire to disparage the real signifi-

cance of the term "Catholic." It ought to be understood, however, that it is not a New Testament expression applied at the beginning to the apostolic church, and the fact ought not to be overlooked that it has acquired in the course of the centuries a parochial and sectarian meaning. It now stands for the "Roman" variety of Christianity, a word of narrowing restriction, limiting the word "Catholic" which it qualifies, and hence the plea that it ought to be resumed for the sake of unifying Christendom, falls to the ground. Where it is assumed there prevails the bitterest hostility to all forms of the faith that differ and dissent from the Roman. Instead of unifying it divides, and I fear were our Episcopal contemporaries, who for many reasons are worthy exceptional honor, to succeed in adopting it the change would not draw them into closer relations with the non-prelatical bodies, and would not deepen in them the spirit of fraternity and liberality.

Of graver significance the impression that has spread within Anglican circles, since the defection of Newman, that the world is mind-weary, and that intellectual rest on matters of faith can only be obtained in the bosom of the Roman Church. A few hundreds of men and women have consequently drifted from the Anglican fold, and probably there are others hovering on the border-land between High Churchism and thoroughgoing Romanism. As we recall certain pages of history this desire to be rid of the responsibility of thinking is quite anomalous. There passes before our eyes a long procession of martyr-heroes, of philosophers, interpreters, scientists, who endured trials of mockings and scourgings, moreover of bonds, imprisonment and death that they might preserve intact the sacred independence of mind. How strange it is that in this free age, largely created by these devoted sufferers, there should appear those who have so far forgotten all that these heroes

stood for as to be anxious to resume the bonds which they proudly cast from them.

In extenuation the reply is made, that Protestantism is fatiguing and repose can only be obtained by listening to the infallible voice at Rome. But why not listen to the infallible voice from heaven? If these mentally exhausted friends will have as much confidence in Christ as they have in the Pope, and will as reverently study His words as they do the encyclicals of his holiness—and it requires more strained attention and acumen to understand the various and often contradictory pronunciamentos of the Vatican than to interpret and comprehend the messages from worlds invisible—they will experience peace enough and will at the same time not abjure the rightful sovereignty of intellect.

I admit my absolute lack of sympathy with the souls that long to hand over the sceptre of thought and conscience to the guidance of a church that has been as mercurial as any other; that always adapts itself with skillful obliviousness to what it has in one place taught, as in Spain, when it is necessary to espouse a different teaching in another, as in America; and that is as frequently disturbed by ecclesiastical discussions and internal dissensions and differences as the humblest and least pretentious body in Christendom. It is cowardly to shirk responsibility for your belief. Nor can it be in reality avoided, for responsibility is incurred in handing over your mind to another, and after all is it not nobler to keep it under your own control? Its restfulness may not be as undisturbed, but its freedom will elevate and more than compensate for lost repose. Besides, what right has any one to seek mental quiet and inactivity? Civilization has been developed through agitation, stress and strain of mind as well as of body; and the Protestant faith, in particular, can never hold its own

or advance if the right of private judgment is vacated and its exercise in things most sacred is suspended or abandoned.

In addition to this, there are signs that not a few Protestants are dissatisfied with the simple form of church government under which they live, and would like an organization of a more kingly pattern, less democratic and independent. The Episcopate has been growing in favor, and has gained serious attention in various quarters because of its claim to historicity. Much is said of a "historic episcopate" and of "holy orders," the possession of which, however, is promptly denied to our Episcopal friends by the Church of Rome. Nor is this ambition restricted to the clergy. It is shared by many laymen; for it is another paradox in modern religious life that laymen in prelatical bodies are taking a larger part than formerly in the direction of affairs. Democracy advances, and yet some representatives of the people are themselves apparently anxious for a monarchical ecclesiastical administration. Probably the two tendencies will act on each other and the final results may not be wholly undesirable.

Nevertheless, there is an immediate cause of apprehension. This exaltation of the church, this accentuation of apostolic descent, this mystical speech about sacraments and the logical inferences from the importance attached to the validity of orders reaching even to the soul's salvation, are raising more questions and creating more doubts than can be met. Instead of these teachings leading to the Episcopal or other prelatical reform church, they prepare the way for the increase of Romanism. In other words, when they are made prominent, not as a matter of taste and propriety, but as revealing what is indispensable to a church, and without which there is no church, and probably no salvation out of the church, Protestants simply

educate their hearers for membership in the Roman Catholic communion.

This is the imminent peril, and it can only be averted by surrendering what is untenable and without foundation in the assumptions involved in this ecclesiastical conception. That there may be good and weighty reasons for the preference being given to an Episcopal form of government over that of Congregationalism I have no desire to dispute. That they do not prevail with many Christians is really of no vital concern. But when the authority of God is claimed for the system, and when it is so articulated and elaborated as to unchurch some millions of godly souls, and when it is taken so seriously as to alienate people from the Protestant faith, then its fallacies ought to be exposed and its pretensions be explicitly denied and refuted.

There is undoubtedly an "historic Episcopacy" dating somewhere from the middle of the third century; but there is also an "historic Independency," older by far, and never entirely obliterated. There is no evidence in the New Testament and no reason in the nature of things for holding to a theory which materializes religion, demanding channels for divine grace which may at any time be fatally and irreparably destroyed by the failure to transmit some magical chrism in ordination. Scholars, like Harnack of Berlin, Wernle of Basel and Hatch and Ramsey of Oxford, whatever their preference may be as to forms of church government, are authorities for the statement that the Roman Catholic idea has no real basis in apostolic literature.

A volume has just appeared on "The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries," from the pen of T. M. Lindsay, D. D., an able and learned man, confirming substantially this view. The available evidence, the result

of the latest inquiries, will be found in the pages of this book, and it corroborates the Protestant position abundantly. He denies "that catholicity must find visible expression in a uniformity of organization, of ritual, of worship, even of formulated creed." Concerning the continuity of the church he writes: "Its basis is a real succession of the generations of faithful followers of their Lord and Master," and he quotes approvingly the saying of Ignatius: "Where Jesus Christ is, there is the whole church. It is in this One Body, present in *every* Christian Society, that our Lord has placed His 'gifts' or *charismata*, which enable the church to perform its divine functions." He logically maintains from these postulates that the authority of office-bearers is delegated by the Christian people, and he asks, "Why not? May the Holy Spirit not use the membership of the church as His instrument?" Further he declares that the church is a Fellowship—"a United Fellowship, a Visible Fellowship, a Fellowship with an Authority bestowed upon it by its Lord, and a Sacerdotal Fellowship whose every member has the right of direct access to the throne of God, bringing with him the sacrifices of himself, of his praise and of his confession."

This is Protestantism. This is the New Testament. This is history. Without challenging the wisdom or propriety of deviating from the New Testament ideal of a church, I sincerely believe, in the interests of Protestantism, we are bound to make clear that the Papal and High Church theory is purely an ambitious fabrication without the least semblance of binding authority. Just discrimination on this point will encourage our people, having begun in the spirit, to continue in the spirit, and having sacrificed for the triumph of the faith, to adhere to it—church and all—lest the sacrifices should be in vain, and Protestantism suffer loss.

The religion of the future depends on the Protestantism of to-day. If the world preserves any type of Christianity whatever, it will be that of Protestantism. The type may be modified by increasing light and reflection, but in its essential character it will prevail. Romanism is too archaic, rococo and mediæval to fit into modern thought and modern civilization. It is even now out of place, and later on in this twentieth century it will be looked on as a spiritual aberration, and a curious survival of the egregious superstitions of antiquity. As schools multiply, as intelligence spreads, and as the masses come to perceive that Romanism has been formally sustained by the privileged classes for the sake of keeping the lower orders in subjection, there will be a very general rejection of its arrogant claims.

When the inevitable falling away occurs will Christianity perish, or will it be saved from further catastrophe by the strength, enlightenment and moral elevation of Protestantism? That question can only be answered by the spirit, ardor, and devotion of her children to-day. If they are unconcerned for the future, if they are so deeply plunged in money-getting and in amusements as to have no special interest in their churches, if they have not energy enough to attend public worship, and if they create the impression by their languidness and lack of liberality and enterprise that their faith has no real grip on mind or conscience, why then, when Romanism crashes to its ruin, its rival will disappear as well, swallowed up in the vortex of world-wide unbelief.

IX

THE CHRISTIANITY OF CHRIST

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."—*John 14: 6.*

IT seems strange at this late day that a learned professor of Church History should consider it necessary to discuss the question: "What is Christianity?" Have the followers of our Lord for centuries been working in the dark, and are they still in doubt as to the character, the meaning and the scope of the religion they are urging on the attention of mankind? The presumption is, unless Dr. Adolf Harnack has lectured in vain, that something like this has been their unhappy plight, and continues to be so still.

The professor in his "Preliminary" address gives an idea of the painful uncertainty in which his subject is involved. He says, for substance, that some people hold primitive Christianity to have been akin to Buddhism, ascetical and pessimistic; while others insist that it is an optimistic religion, a higher phase of Judaism; and yet others declare that it is no such thing and ought to be regarded as "a blossom on the tree of Hellenism." Nor do differences end here. There is one class who teach that the "metaphysical system which was developed out of the gospel is its real kernel"; another who reject with scorn the idea that Christianity has anything to do with philosophy, and has only to do with feeling, suffering, humanity; and a final class of critics who affirm that its genius is essentially "economic" and that it was "in its

origin nothing more than a social movement and Christ a social deliverer, the deliverer of the oppressed lower classes."

The professor, likewise, notes how some persons have come to identify the ideas of men as widely apart as Tolstoi and Nietzsche with the deeper significance of Christianity, and in the course of his discussion shows how differently its nature has been interpreted by Catholicism and Protestantism. He adds to his review the reflection that "the impression which these contradictory opinions convey is disheartening; the confusion seems hopeless. How can we take it amiss of any one, if, after trying to find out how the question stands, he gives it up?"

Other brilliant men have been equally concerned for clearer and more uniform conceptions of the Christian religion. While not discussed from Harnack's point of view, nor avowedly pursuing a line of inquiry identical with his, nevertheless, the "Apostolic Age" of Weizsacker, the "Contribution to the History of Primitive Christian Theology" of Pfleiderer, the "Beginnings of Christianity" of Wernle, and the "Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries" of Lindsay, are all closely related to the subject he has treated so lucidly. The perusal of these volumes and others akin to them is simply bewildering in effect, and to some extent explains the rise of the numerous religious illusions with which this age has been afflicted. Nearly all can read if they cannot think; and discovering the welter and confusion in which the nature of Christianity is enveloped, they feel free to define it according to their own lawless and vagrant mental ramblings and frenzies. Hence the marvellous increase in fanatical sects and stupendous pious frauds which are rapidly driving multitudes into Agnosticism or the madhouse. Carlyle wrote sixty-four years ago:

"In these distracted times, when the Religious Principle, driven out of most churches, either lies unseen in the hearts of good men, looking and longing and silently working there towards some new Revelation; or else wanders homeless over the world, like a disembodied soul seeking its terrestrial organization,—into how *many strange shapes of Superstition and Fanaticism, does it not tentatively and errantly cast itself!* The higher Enthusiasm of man's nature is for the while without Employment; yet does it continue indestructible, unweariedly active, and work blindly in the great chaotic deep; thus *Seat after Seat, and Church after Church, bodies itself forth and melts again into a new metamorphosis.*" [1]

The capitals are his, the italics mine. Not sure as to the real character of Christianity, and quite sure that wise and scholarly men are similarly uncertain, the untrammelled religious principle, and often something that is neither religious nor principled, imparts to it a character of its own devising, and the world is afflicted on the one hand with Christian Science, on the other with Dowieism—the one imperilling health and life, the other jeopardizing sanity and personal freedom—and with many additional erratic departures from the standards of reason and ethics. More startling, even, than the forms which these aberrations assume is the readiness with which they command converts, and the rapidity with which they spread. Nor should it be forgotten that the largest part of their adherents come from the ranks of the churches. It is not as a rule the world that supplies adherents to these new, nondescript sects, neither do their leaders seek converts to any great extent from the ungodly classes of society. Their appeal is mainly to professors of religion, and their success raises the

[1] Quoted by Harnack.

very serious question why disciples of Christ, most of them of mature years, are so easily prevailed on to forsake their faith.

Evidently they are dissatisfied or they would not abandon what they presumably have treasured as a sacred possession. They have not found what they think they ought to find in the churches. The conception of Christianity in most of them is so vague, so indistinct, and in others is so neutral and colorless, and there is so little of assurance about anything in the majority of them, that not a few men and women with their intense longing for reasonable definiteness, and for specific hopes, aims and duties, are ready to go anywhere and adopt almost anything, if their yearnings can be met, preferring to fly to ills they know not of than to endure the ills they have—the very reverse of Shakespeare's reasoning.

Carlyle is right in his diagnosis of the evil, and is only wrong in his phraseology. "The religious principle" has not been driven out of the churches, but clear views as to the genius and character of Christianity have not been entertained for many years, if they ever have been as carefully matured and enforced as they should have been. Haze, fog, cloudiness, which have filled the atmosphere with chill and dreariness, have prevailed, and have succeeded in developing unrest and in driving out many amiable, though perhaps not over-wise people, in quest of what has not been supplied by their own denomination. This phenomenon ought to be treated seriously, not flippantly. Some among us may count it not a small matter, that we are being, notwithstanding our eloquent talk about union, broken up and splintered more and more, and give occasion for a thoughtful writer to predict that the people in the future will be drawn to the "moral kindliness and picturesque organization and venerable traditions of the Roman

Catholic Church," and that they "who do not follow the main current will probably take up with weird science denouncing sects and of the faith-healing type, or with such pseudo-scientific gibberish as theosophy." [1] The possibility of such a sad anti-climax after centuries given to enlightenment and religious progress, is absolutely appalling and sickening. Yet I fear it is not taken as gravely by many leaders as it ought to be, and while they fold their hands the drift continues towards hopeless confusion and chaos.

To avert further divisions and alienations, it is imperative that a comprehensive and exact answer should be given to the question—What is Christianity?—and that the answer should exert a definitive and molding influence on the Christianity of to-day.

Light on this inquiry is thrown by the recent volume from the pen of Prof. J. Estlin Carpenter of Oxford, on "The Bible in the Nineteenth Century," in which occurs this statement:

"To us Christianity is often something abstract and impersonal. In one aspect it is a great historical generalization. But the early believers spoke of Christ, and they thought of a person, not of a movement. To them Christianity was a life, not an organization, or a tendency, or the impalpable spirit of an age. They looked upon the changes which Christ had wrought, and they saw in them a mighty manifestation of the moral and spiritual forces which held the world together, which gave consistency to the outward universe and shaped the destinies of history." [2]

This definition gathered from a careful study of New Testament literature points to a growing impression, which is further strengthened and illumined by Harnack's answer to the question before us. He says:

[1] "Anticipations," by Mr. H. G. Wells. [2] Page 423.

"The Christian religion is something simple and sublime; it means one thing and one thing only: Eternal Life in the midst of time, by the strength and under the eyes of God. It is no ethical or social *arcanum* for the preservation or improvement of things generally. To make what it has done for civilization and human progress the main question, and to determine the value by the answer, is to do it violence at the start. Goethe once said, 'Mankind is always advancing, and man always remains the same.' It is to *man* that religion pertains, to man, as one who in the midst of all change and progress himself never changes. Or as Augustine has it, 'Thou God hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in Thee.'" [1]

These teachers represent the trend of modern cultured thought on the subject of this sermon. It is of interest to observe what they exclude from their conception of Christianity. They will not allow that it is primarily an organization, or an economical social movement, or the impalpable spirit of an age. In explicit terms they both represent Christianity as being preeminently a life. Harnack calls it, Eternal Life in the midst of time. But what is meant by the phrase? The definition is striking. It appeals to us and it is held with more or less distinctness by other distinguished writers. Still we are impelled to inquire: Eternal Life! Who? What? How is it to be understood? We know it is written: "This is life eternal that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ"; and of this Jesus it is said that He has "life abiding in Himself." Thus by these passages, as well as by the peculiar language of Carpenter and Harnack's definition we are led to seek from the Sa-

[1] "What is Christianity," pp. 8, 9.

viour Himself an idea of the religion that bears His name.

Were I asked for a brief but comprehensive definition of Christianity, a definition that would express its essential nature in the fewest possible words, I would answer, "Christ." For He is its essence and its substance, its foundation and its superstructure, its source and its stream, its root and its flower. He is its "Alpha and Omega," its "Beginning and its Ending," its "Yea" and "Amen." In this distinction and not in the height of its intellectual conceptions and the depth of its moral convictions, is its separation from other religious systems most emphatic and pronounced. They all in common have sacred houses, inspired books, sacerdotal orders, ceremonial observances, and solemn worships, and to some extent, the same fundamental teachings; but only Christianity is merged in its author, and is the shadow of His presence and the aureole of His glory.

Michelet recognized the accuracy of this view, while he criticised what it involves and disdained what it implies. In his "Bible of Humanity" he writes:

"But what to love? What to believe? About that there was no precise formula. To love the teacher, and to believe on the teacher. To take his very person, a living creed, for a symbol and a creed. This is the very accurate meaning of all that St. Paul has written, and which has been marvellously well stated in this sentence: 'Jesus taught nothing but Himself.'"

The sentence quoted is from Renan, and it is singular that these brilliant French infidels should so clearly discern what many ecclesiastics and dogmatic teachers have frequently overlooked. Yet the fact is unquestionable that in their miserable contentions about churches, doctrines, apostolical successions, hierarchical dignities, and "rites mag-

ical to sanctify," they have not uncommonly obscured this distinction, and left the impression on mankind that Christianity is Christ, not that Christ is Christianity.

Judged by the New Testament, this confusion of thought on a subject so momentous is unwarranted and inexcusable. Everywhere is the Saviour presented as the permanent life and soul of the new religion. He is spoken of as "the author and finisher of our faith," as "the head over all things to the church," and as "the head of the church" itself; and as the Being in whom all things are "to be gathered together, both which are in heaven, and which are on the earth." It is said that "the church is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all," "in whom," to change the figure, "all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." He dwells in His disciples, and "they are complete in Him." They "grow up into Him in all things," and they "learn Him," as well as of Him, they are "His members" as it were, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. Paul exclaims, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"; and John declares, "In Him was life and the life was the light of men." Conversion is an engrafting into Christ; baptism is the putting on of Christ; the supper is the appropriation of Christ's flesh and blood, and perfection is "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Thus is He Himself the totality, the wholeness, the entirety of what He came to establish among men; and in His own preaching, as in that of His apostles, this idea is kept continuously prominent. He claimed to be the Saviour of the world; He assumed to stand as the only way of access to the Father, and as the only source of spiritual existence on the earth. The kingdom He founded was

His kingdom; the church He constituted was His church, and the disciples He called were His disciples. They were "made clean through His word"; they were to pray in His name; they were to rejoice in His joy; and He promised Himself to answer their supplications; to "dwell in them and manifest Himself to them," and to "be with them always, even unto the end of the world." Throughout His entire ministry, as Luthardt says, "He makes Himself the central point of His every announcement. 'It is I,' is the great text of all His teaching. 'If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins,' is, in fact, a saying in which His whole doctrine may be summed up."

All of these varied statements are substantially expressed by the words of my text, as the burden of a melody may be condensed in a few bars of music,—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life,"—words that were originally spoken to meet the questionings of those who were groping towards the heavenly light, and words on which I desire to dwell.

They first assure us, if we transpose them as I prefer to do, that Christ Himself is God's revelation to man. He is the Bible given to humanity; the "Living Epistle" committed to the churches. In the "Drama of Exile" we have these tremendous lines:

> "Eternity stands always fronting God;
> A stern, colossal image, with blind eyes
> And grand, dim lips that murmur evermore,
> God, God, God!"

Ay, thus indeed stood it through many ages until He came, the first-born and only begotten of Eternity; but now its eyes are opened to the world through Him, and by

His gracious lips it articulates its message of undying love to men.

Mr. Browning has called man the microcosm of the universe, "the adding up of works."

> "Since God collected and resumed in man
> The firmaments, the strata, and the lights,
> Fish, fowl and beast, and insect—all their trains
> Of various life."

But if man is the epitome of creation, a syllabus of nature's book, Christ is more. In Him not merely earth and heaven meet, but God Himself is received into His humanity, and therefrom is reflected on the world. He localizes in His person, Omnipresence; He concentrates within finite limits Infinitude; and focuses in His own being the moral spendor of the Everlasting Judge. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," is His own testimony to Himself. In condescension to our infirmities, the formless One has taken form, not that of angels, but of men; and that He might be one with them, and of them, He was wombed in humanity, incarnated in flesh and born into the world.

The exile-prophet by the river Chebar, above the firmament of gleaming, glowing crystal, and above the majestic manifold wheels, and the all-pervading and enfolding fire, "beheld the likeness of a throne as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne the likeness as the appearance of a man," and now we also from our land of exile discern upon the throne that rises above the sea of glass, and above the ten thousand times ten thousand that minister to His glory, "the appearance of a man," even of Him to whom in the fullness of time it was said: "Sit ye at My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Strange it is, but true, that it is now

difficult to think of God apart from Christ. He who did not spurn humanity, saying, "I have no need of thee," is now only discernible through the veil of its graces and perfections. The manhood of Christ is indispensable to the revelation of the Godhood of God.

Even those theists who see in Christ only an extraordinary human personage, in speaking of the Being whom they worship, at best but reproduce the character of Him whose creaturehood they so persistently affirm. Their definitions are supplied by Him; their vocabulary is derived from His discourses, and their ideas were originally embodied in His life. Were they to thrust from them what He taught and what He expresses they would have to confess that they had lost their God. His revelation of the Father then stands in the strength of its integrity; and though misguided men may reject Him, they dare not despise and cannot dispense with His message.

Christ, as the world's Bible, unfolds to man his duty, and thus supplements what He makes known of the Creator with what is due Him from the creature. The obligations of humanity are not only set forth in our Lord's life, but they are illustrated as well. He "squares to rule the instincts of the soul"; He gives the clue that leads through the whole labyrinth of duty, and shows that all the paths unite at one centre, and that centre love. The ebb and flow of feeling, the light and deep waves of emotion, He explains, prescribes their boundaries, and directs their currents. He is the mold into which society and the individual can safely flow, assured that the impression they will receive from Him will accord with the everlasting rule of right, and will minister to their highest good.

Few, if any, will dispute this statement. His theology may be questioned, but not His ethics. Everywhere they are recognized as the purest and truest standard of human

worth. They are commended by all, they are extolled by all; even by those who never seek to transmute them into conduct. The final appeal of the vexed conscience is carried to His tribunal, and the perplexing scruples of the sensitive are laid at His feet. He is the ultimate rule of practice, acknowledged without controversy, and understood without interpretation. A child can follow Him, and a sage can do no more, and all may learn His meaning simply by looking on His life, unaided by priest or preacher.

As the "Truth," Christ's mission would have been sadly incomplete had He not revealed to man something of the future world. He spoke not much of the "hereafter," as He was busy with the "here," and yet He did not altogether hide from our eyes the glory of heaven. "In My Father's house are many mansions," and "I will come and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also." Thus He spoke, and thus He taught, that heaven is where He is.

"The bride eyes not her garments,
But her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of Grace —
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand,
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land."

Rutherford in these lines correctly interprets our Saviour's doctrine; but I am constrained to go farther, and teach that Christ on earth was Himself the revelation of heaven. Would you know what it is? Look on Him. Its essential nature lies not in crowns and robes and thrones, for He was poor, rejected and despised, but in serenity, rest and love. He was incarnate heaven, as He

was incarnate God. Its majesty, its peace, its blessedness, came down with Him, and with Him traversed the earth, as the sunlight for a little season lights up and warms the deepest and the darkest ravine. Would you know what awaits you in the approaching life? Look at Him. Would you analyze the hope set before you? Then think of Him. He is all that you can wish for or desire. That world for which you pant, and towards which your saddened steps are bending, is holiness, infinite quiet, repose of mind and heart, and love immeasurable. The absence or incompleteness of these things makes time what it is, and their presence and perfectness will invest eternity with joy and beauty.

This is the Lord's message in Himself, to humanity, and it is because all these revelations are summed up in Him that He is called "The Truth," and it is because of this that I have ventured to call Him "the Bible." Of course, I admit that there is a book which bears this name, and which is to be esteemed and studied. But in comparison with Him it is only as the atmosphere, the medium of sight, and not as the object whose image it transmits. The Bible enables us to see the sun of righteousness, but it is the sun itself that guides us on our way. The sacred Scriptures are the outer garments and insignia of our Lord, by which we recognize His character and His dignity; but He, not them, is the supreme rule of our faith and practice. Whether they are verbally inspired or not is comparatively a small matter as long as we discern in Him the fullness and completeness of God's revelation to the race. Where that is discerned, whatever views of inspiration may prevail, we should forbear to judge the loyalty of others, and may believe that the doctrines which He expressed and the precepts which He illustrated will continue ever to elevate and bless mankind.

The text we are studying presents Christ, not only as the "Truth," but as the "Way."

The subject of the conversation, in the course of which the text occurs, was heaven. Our Saviour was going thither, and He would bring His disciples there at last. But how shall they know the way? In response He declares that He came, not to point it out, to be as a sign-board to the weary traveller, but to be Himself the path. This representation corresponds in meaning with the passages which describe Him as the high priest of our salvation, as the redeemer, and as the "one mediator between man and God." The force of these declarations can never be exhausted by any theory of His office that excludes or overlooks His atoning work. They certainly intimate that He came to unite the divided, to reclaim the wandering, and to rescue the guilty.

Paul teaches that "God hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ," and "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." This is something more than teaching morality, or exemplifying love. Important as these sacred endeavors are, we confront in the language of the apostle something more striking and unique. Were it otherwise, hardly could Peter have proclaimed as positively as he did, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." In view of these passages the least we can say is that Christ removes all barriers and hindrances to man's acceptance with the Father. What these barriers are we may not be able to perceive clearly, and how they are destroyed we may not fully understand; but that they are swept away in Him is one of the plainest teachings, if not the plainest, of the Scriptures.

Certainly a disinclination on the part of the Almighty to save the guilty was not one of the difficulties to be over-

come. To His love the sacred writers trace the origin of redemption, and representing him as being in Christ when its measures were accomplished. If orthodoxy has created the impression that God was burning with fiery indignation against the sinner, and was breathing out threats and slaughter which could only be allayed by the interposition of His Son, and that His Son, by excruciating sufferings, won from Him a reluctant assent to mercy, it has done that for which it may well implore forgiveness. If that is orthodoxy it is not Bible.

The Scriptures, on the contrary, represent the Deity as yearning with loving solicitude, for the deliverance of man from the evils which environ him, and which reign over him; as unwilling to abandon him, and at last as sending His Son, or, to speak more accurately, as coming in the person of His Son, to effect redemption. Whatever was done began in God Himself, was planned by Him, was proposed by Him, yea, and was even executed by Him. The partisan theory of salvation, which is unfairly attributed to orthodoxy, and which arrays the Father and the Son on opposite sides, may have been taught by some theologians of the middle ages, but now it has no advocates, and therefore is not deserving serious attention.

The obstacles to be removed were not in God, wherever else they may have been. They may have been in law, in the moral order of the universe, or in man himself, but assuredly not in God. Conceivably law may have interposed a barrier; for we know from our experience how difficult it is to escape the retributive sequence of its violation. When we are enmeshed in the consequences of transgression, we speedily realize that there is only one avenue of escape, one method of extrication, and one that is not always available—compensation. If we have robbed others, to deliver ourselves from the penalty entailed, we

must not only be honest in the future, we must restore the equivalent of what we have taken in the past. Any kind of wrong committed must not only be abandoned, it must be repaired. In many cases how impossible this is; and where it is impossible, even though contrition for the evil wrought may be sincere and deep, how impossible it is to pacify the conscience and renew the lost feeling of self-respect.

Compensation is clamored for by our own moral instincts, as that which the dishonored law demands, and which it must and should receive. But if it is indispensable in the course of ordinary transgression, and if without it there is no escape from the commonplace guilt of daily life, how much more must it be required in the case of man's apostasy from God, in which not only the precepts of law are outraged, but its very existence and authority treated with disdain? And if in the former instances compensation is at times so difficult to render, who in the latter can ever hope to render it in full?

Evidently under the government of God there is a place and a demand for compensation which human endeavor is inadequate to furnish, and which must be supplied by one who is entirely separate and free from man's transgression. Such an one is Christ. He is Himself the needed compensation. His voluntary incarnation means His voluntary submission to the law; His obedient life under adverse circumstances, and conditions of suffering, of suffering even unto death, means His acceptance of it as holy, just, and good in all of its terrible processes and retributive sequences. He magnifies it and makes it honorable, restores its dignity and authority, reinvests it with its glory and exalts it in the eyes of men and angels. Here is compensation,—compensation that meets in full the just demands of insulted law, that overcomes one of the greatest hindrances

to man's salvation, and that renders eternal life accessible to all.

I have said one, for there yet remains another. It is in man himself. He is spiritually dead; he must be made alive. This also is the work of Christ. As the compensation of the law He is the "Way"; as the vitalizing principle of the soul He is the "Life." Nor is He this simply because all spiritual forces inhere in Him; but in addition, because His self-sacrificing obedience has begotten a moral power over humanity. This is acknowledged by those who question His divinity, and it is felt by those who reject His atonement. It is the one fact about which there is hardly any controversy.

All admit that contact with Him purifies, and that in destroying the love of sin He extricates us from its penalty. The Hindu sages relate a legend which illustrates the principle involved. They represent the Rajah Vievamitra, an eastern ruler, a writer of Vedic hymns, and parent of a hundred sons, as deciding to become a Brahmin. His application is rejected. Whereupon he retires to solitude, undergoes self-mortifications and sufferings for a thousand years, thereby acquiring such merit and such formidable power that he can annihilate the world and empty heaven and earth of gods and men with a word or at a nod. He is besought by celestial beings to spare the universe, and he consents, but he himself never dies. He lives on forever. Time cannot destroy him.

Under the surface of this legend we find a truth of the greatest moment. It teaches the power of the soul, which, according to Hindu thought, when strong in righteousness, and emptied of selfishness, can make and unmake, create and annihilate as well. Such moral omnipotence has Christ acquired over men by His disregard of self, His love for them, and His devotion to the supremacy of law.

By His disinterestedness He wins them from worldliness, by His affection from earthliness, and by His self-sacrificing obedience from self-seeking meanness and folly. When He thus becomes to the individual the source of a nobler and a purer existence, He also becomes to him the assurance of an eternal life of felicity.

In receiving Christ man receives as well the evidence of personal and blessed immortality. Previously this hope gleamed upon his soul like moonrise; now it shines with all the splendor of a sunrise. Once it was a wish, a probability; now it is a conviction, a certainty. Now it matters not to him when death comes to call him from the things of earth, things both dear and loved. Time was when the footfall of the destroyer approaching his dwelling filled him with a nameless horror, when the chill of its breath thrilled him with alarm, and when he would have fled into the deepest depths to hide from the hated presence. But that time is passed. Christ being with him and in him, he throws wide his window and opens wide his door, that death may be welcomed when it comes; and if he pauses irresolute on the threshold, or clings to loved ones reluctant to depart, it is not that he fears the strange unseen, but that he would fain bear with him the sacred treasures of earth to enrich the wealth of heaven.

From these premises it is my conclusion and conviction that in all essential respects Christ Himself is Christianity. Not the visible church, not its solemn ordinances, not its discipline, institutions, or observances. These are all important in their place. They are accessories, appendages, instrumentalities and adornments. They give structural stability to truth; they organize the spiritual forces of society, and perpetuate the memory of Christ's mission in the world. I would not undervalue them; I admit no

man's right to tamper with them; I insist that they shall be maintained and venerated, but I deprecate that carelessness of statement, or that perversion of scripture, which has led so many to regard them as in some sense of saving value. Such they certainly are not, and such they never can be. Trust them not, I pray, for they will fail you; confide not to them the interests of your soul, for they will betray you. The only Saviour is Christ, and whosoever trusteth Him shall never be confounded.

If the doctrine of this discourse is true, then, my brethren, we are bound to make Christ the centre of our meditations, our worship and our preaching. In other words, if we would have Christianity we must have Christ, for without Christ Christianity is impossible. I make this remark because in some quarters a disposition has been manifested to dispense with Him, and yet retain the name of His religion. A recent writer calls attention to an Easter service in which "from beginning to end neither the name of Jesus nor of Christ appeared, nor any allusion to the resurrection." He also refers to a book of song for Sunday-schools which might be used for a series of years without Christ ever being heard of; and alludes to articles of agreement adopted by a professed church in which no mention is made of God, of Christ, or of the Bible. This state of things he deplores, and for himself bears this testimony: "Outside of spiritual allegiance to Him (Christ), I find no effectual approach to men, no sufficient argument for self-denial and self-sacrifice." Well may he write thus, for even Strauss, avowed rationalist as he was, admits that "Christ remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought, and no perfect piety is possible without His presence in the heart." And he adds: "As little as humanity will be without religion, as little will it be without Christ; for to have religion without Christ

would be as absurd as to enjoy poetry with regard to Homer or Shakespeare."

If it shall be said that this drift is so far outside of orthodox channels that it can hardly concern us, I might with safety say that this is not the case.

But granting that we are sound and faithful in this respect, can we be indifferent to an error of such magnitude, seeking as it does to alienate society from Christ? No, we cannot be indifferent without deservedly incurring censure. It is our duty, our preeminent duty, to exalt and magnify Christ; to direct towards Him the eyes of our fellow-beings, and to lead them, by our preaching and our lives, to trust Him and Him alone. We should protest against every endeavor to hide Him, to diminish His influence, to obscure His glory. We owe it to Him, we owe it to ourselves, yea, we owe it to the souls of men, and to society itself, from which religion will inevitably depart:—Strauss being judge—if Christ's name ceases to be reverenced and honored. If Christ is Christianity, then Christianity should be a portraiture of Christ. Can we say that it is? Can we claim that it faithfully represents Him, or that the world could form a just conception of what He is from what it is?

These questions are too serious, too vital, to be treated lightly. Is it reasonable, I ask in all earnestness, to suppose that any candid inquirer, ignorant of the facts, would ever suspect that Christianity proceeded from such a being as Christ, or that He ever had the remotest connection with it? I do not believe he would. No, he could hardly be convinced that this Christianity, rent and torn by dissensions; degraded by unseemly wrangles over trifles; split and separated into sects; debased by worldliness and disfigured by sordidness, had ever heard of Him whose name it has adopted. Its jealousies are so frequent, its petty am-

bitions are so conspicuous, its faint-heartedness, cold-heartedness, and, I was going to say, its hard-heartedness, are so manifest at times that it seems altogether more human than divine. When its members are indifferent to human welfare, and heedless of each other's happiness; when its ministers are unconcerned for souls, and are careless of each other's good; and when its courts are unmindful of Christian liberty, and indisposed to recognize the right of independent thought, the fair image of Christ is effaced, and its glory has departed.

Place Christ before you and shape your religious life, your religious institutions, and your future religious work after His likeness. Impart to visible Christianity His moral beauty, His spiritual sublimity, His tender patience, His sweet forbearance, His gentle thoughtfulness, His boundless generosity, His sweet charity and enduring love; then will all men acknowledge its heavenly origin; then will they reverently listen to its word, and then will they bring their hearts to its altars, and devote their energies to its service. Then, not till then, shall be heard all over the earth,

> "The music of the world's accord,
> Confessing Christ, the incarnate Word."

Immeasurably grave the responsibility if the church shall fail to meet this obligation. The results of this failure, if we are to believe His word, are necessarily lamentable. If He is not exalted, if He is obscured, if He is hidden by indifference, faithlessness or faulty representation, how shall, how can, the world be saved? Let us not forget that the gracious assurance of the text is followed by a most startling announcement: "No one cometh unto the Father but by Me." He here assumes to be the only Saviour. All others He waves aside. If this claim is well-

grounded, then all who know Him are bound by the most solemn considerations to make Him known. Can it be that His language is to be taken seriously? If not, then He has trifled with the race on the most momentous of themes.

I dare not challenge his statement particularly as there is no evidence that any of the alleged rivals of our Lord have ever saved any one. I am not inclined to underestimate what they may have done for humanity, and yet I am satisfied, whether they be persons, systems, or theories, their merits have been greatly exaggerated. Take as an instance, Buddha, of whom so much has been written of late, and for whom our admiration is bespoken, and estimate the real advantage of his mission to the world. You will find it infinitely less potent for good than you have been led to suppose by what has been said by his Anglo-American devotees.

Disputing neither the nobility of his life nor the purity of certain sentiments he taught, nor yet denying the value of the reforms which he inaugurated, it cannot be shown that he renovated Indian society or radically changed for the better the character of individuals. Under the influence of the faith he proclaimed his mighty country declined, became a prey to the arms of England, and is now accepting the religion of its masters as its only hope of reinvigoration. What he taught was undoubtedly good enough as far as it went; but it either went not far enough or failed to carry with it healthful restoring truth; for it has been as impotent to impart moral strength as the disciples were at one time to cast out the demon from the body of the possessed child.

Recently it has been said that Krishna, a heathen deity, whose name, according to Sir William Jones, means "Black and Blue," but which has been written by unbelievers in such a way as to create the impression that it is

substantially the same as "Christ," was very like our Saviour, not merely in his career, but likewise in what he wrought for humanity. These representations are largely visionary. We gather from various sources, including the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana, that Krishna was regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu, combining in himself not only exalted powers, but powers far otherwise than exalted, who in early days gave himself up to wanton delights with cowherdesses, and who in after life was famous for exploits in destroying the wicked and for certain humane counsels which were certainly in advance of his age. As to the degree of confidence to be reposed in this Indian hero, I have simply to say that it has been stated by those who are authorities, "that much personal biography is to be discerned through this immeasurable haze of fable is improbable enough." That is, his historical reality is exceedingly vague even as his influence over the morals of his era and subsequent periods has been exceedingly slight and shadowy.

To exalt either of these heroes to a level with Christ, and to claim that they renovated society or set in operation spiritual forces which changed for the better its character in the same sense and the same degree as Christ did, is to assume immeasurably more than can be made good, and to be totally blind to the significance of the fact that the religion of the latter is at present engaged in the task of saving those who, according to the theories of infidels, have already been saved by the religion of the former.

Equally impotent have education and various reforms proven. They have enlightened, they have in various ways been advantageous, but they have invariably stopped short of radical moral transformation. Neither personal nor social purity resulted from the icy, snow-wreathed philosophy of the Porch; neither did it spring from the speculations

of the Academy; neither did it follow the melody of Homer, the wisdom of Socrates, the reasoning of Plato, the vivacity of Pindar, the gloomy tragicality of Euripides, the stately eloquence of Demosthenes, nor the sombre atheism of Lucretius. The works of the ancients, stimulating though they are to genius, are rather depressing than otherwise to the soul of innocence and truth. They do not promote virtue. They may be likened to the flora of far-off Eastern lands, rich, gigantic, brilliant, unsurpassed in size and color, yet creating an atmosphere heavy with disease and charged with death. While more can be said in favor of other branches of education, yet for none can moral power commensurate with the world's need be claimed. The arts and sciences fail to touch the springs of conduct, and assuredly fail to cleanse them if they are befouled. What is true of head culture is, alas, only too true of those reforms which are set forth with so much acclaim as the destined saviours of mankind. Now it is Socialism that is paraded before us, red cap on head, coarse and violent in talk, the value of whose gospel may be estimated by the blood on its hands and the ghastly human heads carried about on its pikes.

Trades unions are also introduced as having the "potency and promise" of a nobler life; and yet when we find them leading to hasty strikes that impoverish thousands and to blackmailing walking delegates we cannot but feel that they are blind guides, and that, whatever good they may have done, they fail signally in bringing about any such changes as to entitle them to the rank which they assume. We cannot be ignorant of their failures, and however pronounced their success may be in subordinate directions, so long as these failures in more vital matters continue they cannot be hailed as saviours of society.

No; it is not possible for your Buddhas, your Krishnas,

your Labor-Reform parties, and your Socialistic philanthropies, to renovate humanity and thereby transform the character of society? No; they probe not deep enough; their methods fail to touch the inbred evil; their remedies merely drive the disease from the surface and do not expel it from the blood. There is nothing in their teachings or their appliances to create the least confidence in their success. They may reveal some noble duties, but they impart no power to perform them; they may make known some worthy conceptions of what the world should be, but they communicate no recognizable moral force by which they may be realized. They are ships without sails, magnificent machinery without steam, lamps without light, glorious landscapes without fertility, clouds without rain, bodies without life, motionless, unluminous, dry and dead, potent to promise, but, in the nature of things, impotent to execute.

We are shut up to the conclusion that if there is a Saviour at all it must be Christ Jesus. He can and will save, and He has already saved. Witnesses to this fact are around us everywhere, and they start up from the distant past. Voices through all the centuries sounding and echoing to-day about us proclaim that "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him." The Bible declares that He is "the author of eternal salvation," "the captain of salvation"; that "He was raised up a horn of salvation"; "that His own arm brought salvation"; and that He is "mighty to save." Nineteen hundred years confirm the testimony of Holy Writ, and still at the hour when distress is deepest and guilt is blackest, and when disappointment is keenest and despair is direst, all kinds and conditions of men instinctively turn to Christ as the one sure and available refuge.

Hence, Christianity, if true to herself, has no other Re-

deemer to preach, and in reality has no other Redeemer to trust. Instead, therefore, of searching for other suns than the one that warms the earth to-day, rejoice in what you know to be yours, and, instead of wondering whether there may not be other Christs, accept the One who comes to you now so tenderly and pleadingly. As Peter on the threshold of the Beautiful Gate preached Him and Him only, so should Christian people, standing in the radiance of their own experience, and standing likewise in the more beautiful gate that leads to Paradise, take up His testimony, and by speech and deed declare that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

X

THE CROWNING GLORY OF CHRISTIANITY

"The greatest of these is love."—*1 Corinthians 13 : 13.*

NO attribute of man's soul, no possibility of his nature, has been invested with such regal honors as love. Reason has been extolled, imagination has been praised and physical beauty has been adored, but love has been exalted over them all as the atmosphere of heaven blessing the earth, and as the aureole of glory crowning the saint with divine effulgence.

While not unknown to the ancients, while leading to many notable sacrifices in the past, and while recognized by the old Mosaic law, still two thousand years ago the world had only an incomplete knowledge of its nature or of its dignity. The import of each virtue grows in depth and significance with the progress of the ages.

It is not that these features of human excellence are absolutely changed in the course of events, but rather that they take on a higher and grander meaning. Honor among the people of pre-Christian times, while in its essence what it is now, was more irrational, more grotesque and more quarrelsome than at present. Compassion was only rudimentary in those remote periods, and those in whom it dwelt could without sense of self-condemnation visit extraordinary sufferings on offenders and savage barbarities on those captured in war.

In these days our sensibilities are shocked at the recital of wrongs endured, and by the story of miseries experienced by the wayward and the worthless. Justice also

denotes more to this generation than to any preceding one. Every now and then it is intimated that the sense of it has declined, but the fact is we know more of it, and we are more sensitive to its failures, and realize more than our ancestors how wide-reaching it should be. Hence, our complaints and our discouragements. We must remember that the dictionary which defines and illuminates these virtues is history. If we would know what they are we must consult its annals. We must take all the examples of honor, truth, integrity and righteousness which occur on its pages and get at their essence, if we would form an adequate idea of their character.

Love, likewise, must be understood and estimated in the same manner. History has been pouring into this word the disinterestedness, the self-abnegation, the heroic martyrdom, the tender ministries, the lowly services, beginning with the teachings and sacrifice of our Lord, to the last act of generous kindness performed, and love means more to-day than at any previous time. The more we comprehend it, the more fully do we sympathize with our Lord's judgment in making it central to the religion He founded, and the very source and spring of everything divinest and noblest in our earthly life.

When St. Paul penned this eloquent tribute, religion had reached the most important stage in its historical development. The glittering ceremonial of Judaism, the splendid and superstitious ritualism of paganism, were decadent and departing, and the miraculous gifts and wonders of primitive Christianity were already preparing to vanish away.

These things, like the grass and its flower, were being cut down and were rapidly fading. Religion was passing through a most stupendous transformation—from being provincial it was becoming catholic, from being a shadow

it was becoming a reality, from being a form it was becoming a life, and from being a bondage it was becoming a redemption from sin and guilt and from the social tyrannies of the ancient world.

But to a people who had always identified it with the outward, with magnificent temples, with gorgeous priesthoods, with visible altars, and with pretentiousness of bewildering marvels, these changes were almost synonymous with the triumph of atheism. Dispossessed of these distinctive marks, how could the new cult, whose founder was a peasant, whose apostles were fishermen, whose sign was the infamous cross, and whose worship was so essentially spiritual as to render superfluous sacred localities and sacred orders, hope to arrest the attention or secure the homage of mankind?

To meet this perplexity St. Paul devotes various passages in his invaluable epistles; and in this portion of his letter to the Corinthians, where the same doubt seems to be troubling the disciples, he declares that God had provided substitutes for the things that were necessarily transient—"faith, hope, love." These three are to remain, these three, the one opening the eyes to God and the unseen, the second opening the eyes to the better future, both in time and eternity, and the third opening the eyes to see the sacredness of humanity and to feel for the woes and sorrows, sins and shame, of every fellow-being. The apostle is quite sure that these surpass in value all that they supplant, and that these three are themselves sufficient to invest religion with attractiveness and power; and that in their presence the external pomp and showy observances to which they so tenaciously clung dwindled into insignificance and vanity.

Of these graces the apostle singles out one which surpasses in greatness the others, and devotes this beautiful

chapter to its exposition and exaltation. To him it is evidently the special and crowning glory of Christianity.

The great religions of the world are distinguishable from each other by some supreme characteristic. Thus, the genius of Hinduism is mysticism, that of Buddhism is asceticism, that of Parseeism is dualism, that of Mohammedanism is fanaticism, that of Confucianism is secularism,— and that of our own faith is altruism, or love. No other inference than this is possible from the teachings of the New Testament. There God is represented as sending His Son to the earth because He loved, and He in this way "commends His love," and then St. John, seeking to sum up His nature in a single word, exclaims: "God is love!" Here then we have the origin of the Christian religion. It has been begotten of a divine love, and in this grace it is to find its true expression and its most complete fulfillment. Hence the many and varied ways in which its spirit and obligations are enjoined on the disciples. They are to love God with all their mind and strength, and their neighbor as themselves. They are reminded that love edifies, and that it covers a multitude of sins, and more than all that it is the essence of the new birth; "for he who loveth is born of God."

The church of late years has come more and more into sympathy with this conception, and the world lying beyond its bounds has professed itself charmed and fascinated by such a religion. Yet there is reason to fear that they are both, to some extent, at least, ravished by a sentimental illusion of their own creation, and that neither has a comprehensive idea of what is involved in that which they praise so fervently. Indeed, there are not lacking signs that we love more in word than in deed, that we frequently substitute the word, especially when it is an eloquent one, for the deed, and that sometimes we are wholly at fault in

our understanding of what Christian love really is, what it enjoins, what it leads to and what is the secret of its power. In these circumstances I may be permitted to examine anew

The Crowning Glory of Christianity

That love is entitled to be thus distinguished is demonstrated by what St. Paul says in this chapter concerning *its relative value, its incomparable character, and its imperishable influence.*

We can hardly fail to observe, as we follow the apostle's thought, that in this tribute he is magnifying affection on its human side and in its earthly manifestations, and does not once relate it to its supreme object, the Heavenly Father. A recent writer reminds us that this too is somewhat noticeable in the teachings of Christ: "The references which He makes to the love which man bears to God are fewer than might have been supposed from the intensity with which the mystics have urged this on mankind as the supreme ideal of religion." May it not be that just here we touch on one of the misconceptions which have rendered some of the saints vulnerable to criticism?

They have wrought themselves into a fervor of passionate devotion, or into an ecstasy of feeling, and this they have looked on as love for God, and have imagined because of the comfort and satisfaction they themselves experienced that in this way they have also exhibited and exhausted their love for man. But this does not follow. I am inclined to interpret our Lord's comparative reticence on how we are to show our love for God, and His specific and minute instruction as to how we are to evince it for our fellow-beings, as designed to save us from this confusion, and to remind us that, after all, it is by benevolent human service we fulfill the promptings of our love for God. For,

as an earthly parent is touched more deeply and is honored more highly by kindnesses shown to his children than to himself, so our Father in heaven is pleased to accept as worship what we do to aid and to bless His children when inspired by our love for Him.

In estimating the value of this grace, which is done in the three opening verses of the chapter, there are certain words which are of importance to the exposition: "though I *speak*," "though I *have*," and "though I *bestow*." That is, love is quite superior to anything we may say, anything we may possess, or anything we may confer or give.

And yet tongues, both of men and of angels, are of incomputable worth. Of the latter we cannot form an adequate idea, and can only imagine that they must surpass the power of human eloquence. But who shall fix for us the terms of our indebtedness to what we do know, whether oral or written, whether it charm us through the potent spell of the voice, or through the silent fascination of the printed page?

Speech, what has it not done? It has been the truest torch by which the world's ignorance has been dispelled; it has been a human sacrament by which the world's faith has been quickened; it has been the noblest tribune by which the world's rights have been defended; it has been the sweetest harp by which the world's sorrows have been assuaged; it has been the keenest sword by which the world's liberties have been championed; and it has been the mightiest force by which the world's progress has been accelerated. Yet love is worth more than it. One breath of love is more excellent and precious than the finest sentences ever woven, or the grandest peroration ever uttered when love is absent. There is more healing in its touch, more consolation in its smile than in all the stately periods

of a Burke or Webster, of a Massillon or Hooker. Without it oratory is a delusion and a snare; and what is pitiably pathetic there is no necessary connection between them. Men may write and talk beautiful things, and avow the purest sentiments, and do it all in the most poetic phrases, and the heart be dead and cold. Well, then, does the apostle liken such loveless speech to clanging brass and tinkling cymbals, to a noise that crashes on the ear and startles, but which conveys no subtle sound of divinest melody to the troubled soul.

In comparison also with possessions love is preeminent. This is the apostle's second standard of valuation. The treasures he enumerates are not to be despised. They include the "gift of prophecy," "the knowledge of mysteries," and "the faith to remove mountains." These surely are worthy any man's solicitude and ambition. They have too often been extolled to need fresh appraisement now. But the distinction here implied is altogether startling.

It is intimated that these possessions may be held and exercised by those who are strangers to the grace of love. Our Lord once said: "Ye shall profess to have cast out devils in My name, and in My name to have done many wonderful works. I will say unto you, Depart, I never knew you." What! people overcoming the powers of darkness and achieving marvels, and yet unowned by the blessed Saviour! Why, there are persons in many of our cities who are removing mountains of nervous diseases, and who claim that they succeed because they feel more fully than others the force of divine love, and who are proselyting feeble evangelical professors in the name of the life of love; and yet, if this text is to be credited, all that they accomplish is possible without love.

Prophecies may be uttered by a Balaam; a Simon

Magus may bewitch by his sorceries; a Judas may share with his brethren of the apostolate in casting out devils and still be seekers of gain and indifferent to human affection. These marvels of Lourdes, these healings that proceed from mental suggestion or hypnotism, or from some other unexplained psychic force, may be wrought by those in whom the divine spirit is no more operative than in those who, pretending to no such power, are doing their best to live nobly and unsensationally. Nay, it is quite mortifying to read that we may have knowledge, discernment, foresight and faith, and yet be really nothing. This is humiliating.

Love is worth more than all else. It is the ballast needed in life's voyage, and without it we are unfitted for our mission. Last winter a great steamer arrived in port and hundreds of her bolts were found to be loose. The waves had pounded her from without, and she had not had enough cargo within to resist the attacks. Hence she had to be overhauled. She had, so to speak, knowledge, she had discernment or foresight to see her way, and she had overcome mountains of waters—but she was "nothing." She had brought nothing to America, and was very much damaged by doing so. Love is necessary to make all of our other possessions in the highest sense useful, and to keep them from proving a possible detriment to our spiritual progress.

Neither can our gifts serve as a substitute and compensation for its absence. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor—it profiteth me nothing," continues the apostle in this most disillusionizing discourse. Why, we moderns have almost come to identify almsgiving with religion, and have almost concluded that if we feed the poor after we have made our millions the Lord will forgive us, even if we have somewhat starved the poor for

the sake of making them. No honest student of the Scriptures can for a moment credit so preposterous a position. We may be generous with our money, and we may give promptly so as not to be annoyed by importunity, or even as an act of retributive justice against our own oppressions demanded by our outraged conscience, and yet be utterly devoid of religion.

It is very sad to see people missing the mark. Love is the very essence of religion, and without it there is no religion. The Romanist may trust his ceremonies and the Protestant his benefactions; but these things will profit neither of them anything. Whatever significance they may have, and whatever good they may do, they are valueless without love—and if love be present, then a bishop such as Victor Hugo paints is a blessing, notwithstanding his rituals, and then a poor curate or vicar, such as Goldsmith portrays, is a living benefaction to society, notwithstanding his poverty.

All this is suggested by what St. Paul writes, without in the least detracting from the relative worth of faith, knowledge, prophecy, benevolence or any other good thing. All of these treasures have their place and office in Christ's church. All have a beauty, though love is the fairest; all are children of God, though love is the divinest. It is impossible to dispense with faith, for we must believe something; nor can we do without hope, for we must all be inspired by expectation; and we cannot progress without knowledge, for by light do we see how to advance; but love transcends them all, is the highest mountain top in all this glorious range of excellencies, without which they would be as apparently dwarfed and dull as would be the alpine scenery of Switzerland without Mont Blanc or the Matterhorn.

The apostle having computed the exceptional precious-

ness of love proceeds to give a sketch of her character. He furnishes the church a full-length portrait of her many charms.

Trench thinks this was necessary, as the word employed was not known in classic literature, and had to be fashioned to create the idea. This point I will not dispute with the learned author of "Synonyms and their Uses," and yet Plato calls the sympathy between mind and mind by the name of love. We may, however, concede this much, that the old term had to be newly defined and baptized into a new spirit. New Testament love can never be annotated and interpreted by classical literature, but only by the New Testament itself. The verses from the fourth to the seventh inclusive, give us a noble conception of its wonderful and comprehensive significance. Let us unveil the picture painted by St. Paul, and attempt to restore some of the colors which have been a trifle obscured by their exposure to the strange sentimental atmosphere of modern life.

We ought, first of all, to take note of her graciousness and unobtrusiveness. She "vaunteth not herself and is not puffed up." On the housetops she does not stand drawing attention to herself. The disposition to parade and show off is not hers. In this she differs from much that has assumed her name in modern times. We may receive with caution the loud asseverations of those who insist that they are preeminently the lovers of their fellowmen. This grace always reveals itself in deeds, and not in empty protestations. Love does not "behave herself unseemly"—is not arrogant, flighty and exacting. But she is kind; that is, always considerate and courteous. Her speech is healing and sweet, and her thoughtfulness of the feelings of others is constant. She remembers that the poorest and humblest are human beings.

She does not seek her own. I fear by this rule her sway is not very conspicuous in modern times. She surely does not reveal herself in the temper which declares that business belongs to one domain and religion to another, that not only seeks its own but also what belongs to others, and whose rule of life outside the church is that of unmitigated selfishness. Neither is she manifest in the spirit of offended dignity that seeks more than is her own in the acknowledgments demanded from some one who has transgressed against a fellow-being. On the contrary, it is of the nature of love to give. "As the feeble child arms of the Christ must have encircled Mary's neck, and now in their divine strength embrace the world," so love enfolds humanity and conveys benediction with its smile.

It is the genius of love to give. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." As the universe, symbol of the Creator's heart, is constantly sending new light from the sun, rivers from the earth to the sea, floods from the sea to the clouds, and rain from the clouds to the earth again, so wherever love is she is ever giving freely of her possessions and of herself. Explain it as we may, she is endued with the power of transmitting her very self to the lonely and weary hearts of men and women whom she would help and comfort. Naturally, all this being true, she is also long-suffering, that is, patient and tolerant.

Faith, taken by itself, is always in danger of the opposite. In proportion as it has been cultivated at the expense of affection, it has prepared inquisitions and thumbscrews and has perpetrated fanatical crimes. Lecky and other rationalists maintain that the intense realization of religious doctrines has led priests and churches into wholesale murder.

Knowledge, also, when unbaptized in affection is likely

to be vain, cold, and critical. It often glitters like ice, and is as uncertain. An apostle writes: "Knowledge puffeth up, charity edifieth." No disrespect to the mind's acquisitions is here intended; but how much more valuable would they be if sanctified by affection. Poor Thomas Carlyle—how he would writhe in his grave could he hear himself called what he called so many, such as Charles Lamb—"*poor*"—and yet this he was, for his mind was in a constant state of anarchy and his tongue caustic with useless criticisms. Had he only loved both God and man more, how much more enduring would the product of his genius have been. It is said that the "undevout astronomer is mad," and I have observed that the scientists who manifest reverence for God are not only more intelligible, but are more convincing. This I know will be questioned, and it will be said that these high themes should be approached in the pure spirit of logic.

It is, however, doubtful, whether this is possible where personal relations are concerned. It may be feasible in mathematics, but not in a philosophy of the universe. If demanded in thinking of Him whom we have not seen, it is also needed in the case of him whom we have seen. We are to deal intelligently with others. Without reason we shall run into wild sentimentality which will prove fatal to those whom we would help, but without love reason will judge men in such a way as to do lasting harm. Think, for a moment, what would be your estimate of mankind were you to lose all charity and compassion of thought. You would become practically an enemy of your kind. To do your best for others you must allow love its own throne in your mind. "Judge as you would be judged, mete as you would have it meted unto you," for only in this way can you honor others as you would yourself be honored.

Knowledge often sneers and mocks at the illiterate, and

is disposed to withdraw from human intercourse. But the attitude of love is different. She realizes the magnitude of truth, the difficulties in the way of mastering its secrets, the weakness of the intellect, the limiting strength of prejudice, and therefore does not expect complete agreement in creeds and is generous in her judgments of those who are earnestly seeking the light. She has no *index expurgatorius* for human thought, however wild or erratic. She is as much opposed to coarse denunciation of those who may be in error, as she is to inquisitorial suppression of free speech—knowing by the divine insight which is hers, that it is only through freedom of inquiry and of expression that truth triumphs and builds its imperishable throne.

Love is also distinguished by joyousness and conscientiousness. Probably she rejoices because she is upright. And here we reach a special variation from current notions. Generally love is identified with amiability and gentleness, and with a sentimental indifference to some radical distinctions on which the welfare of society depends. To send flowers to murderers, to indulge in maudlin solicitude for bank wreckers and defaulters, and to say sweet things about movements in society which imperil health and morals, and never to protest vigorously against wrongdoing and misleading interpretations of the Bible, is taken by not a few as the equivalent of love.

Like Glaucus, the son of Minos, who was smothered in honey, many expect that the ethical life of love shall be engulfed and stifled by mere sweetness. Hence we have clergymen who hardly do anything else than cultivate smiles and benignant expressions, who strive to look ecstatic, and whose chief aim apparently is to avoid giving offense. We do not deny that this grace is naturally joyous. You are never happy when you hate, or are ill-tempered, or censorious. Nothing brings so much peace into

the soul as genuine affection. And this because "it taketh not account of evil"—to use the revised text—that is, is not perpetually fearing it, anticipating it and expecting its victory.

Love cannot for a moment concede that evil in such a universe as this, created by a gracious Father, can be anything more, however real it may be, than a passing shadow and tempest. She has the conviction that evil cannot permanently prevail against her, and that she must finally exterminate evil. Love rejoices, likewise, because she has no pleasure in iniquity. That she hates with perfect hatred. Never expect her fair lips to say soft things about it or to apologize for its inroads and ravages. There is always intense satisfaction in the consciousness that sin is intolerable. Truth when it is prized yields additional gladness. To hold it, to discover it, to cherish it, contributes to personal dignity. How far away the Friends are from this spirit we may ourselves judge when they talk their eloquent talk about its being substantially the same whatever the mind may believe, and denounce as intolerance what is only conviction, and as bigotry what is only enlightenment. They never indulge in such incoherent and disjointed speech when the truths of science challenge submission, but only when religion states its creed. Whatever or whoever may justify this laxity, love does not. She must always prize the good and the pure in thought as well as activity, and is the last virtue in the universe to disparage the value of what God has revealed in His enduring Word.

The character of love is crowned with the radiance of vicariousness and trustfulness. She bears and endures all things. She takes on herself the shame and sorrow of mankind as Jesus took on Himself the world's grief and guilt. He bore that He might expiate and expel them; love en-

dures that she may remedy and remove. There has only one atonement been offered, but there must be many reconciliations. Love knows that the race cannot be rescued without sacrifice. Hence, feeling in her sympathy the wrong and the woe that afflict the children of Adam, she is perpetually travailing in pain for their deliverance. The love that never knows tears for the fallen, and agony for the wretched—that is only good-natured and genial,—is not the love God felt for man when He gave His Son to die, and is not the love St. Paul eulogizes here.

The depth of her sorrow and the intensity of her passion do not prevent her from "believing all things and hoping all things." She is trustful. It is not for her to doubt. She is optimistic. It is not for her to despair. The future is hers. She looks into humanity, into the blackness of its heart, into the slime and slush of its degradation, into its manifold defeats and disasters, and yet believes all things to be possible, and that out of the ignoble and the base she will be able yet to make a humanity glorious with light and beauty. Hoping all things she perseveres upon her way, carrying her burden, performing her task, and praying for the dawning of the better and endless day.

Such, then, is love; and we may now advance to St. Paul's final thought by which the supremacy of this grace is confirmed—its imperishable influence. "Love never faileth." It is the one immortal thing. Faith and hope also abide—and yet we can readily foresee the time when hope will be fulfilled, and when faith will be lost in sight. These three are permanent in the church here and now, but when eternity shall dawn it would seem that only love would survive, as it is the very life of God, and His children are to be like Him.

Then there are other things which we esteem and which it will outlast. "Whether there be tongues they shall

cease." Already many of them have gone dumb, and how little value is now attached to what we call eloquence. Where are our "cunning orators"? Demosthenes, Burke, Webster, Clay, Gladstone, and the "golden-mouthed" preachers, from the John of Antioch to the Phillips Brooks of Boston, have uttered their messages and the voices that thrilled the world are hushed forever. Knowledge likewise is transitory. We unlearn to-day what yesterday we acquired with pain and labor. Libraries have been outgrown, as that of Alexandria was destroyed by fire; new views of the universe, fresh and novel discoveries and application of sciences have quite superseded the wisdom of the ancients. We live in a new world, and have buried out of sight tomes of old fashioned learning. The scholars of the middle ages have been pushed aside for the living thought of the modern era. Prophecies, too, cease; that is, the function of the seer has come to an end, or it has been perpetuated only in the mission of the pulpit. Even there it is destined to pass away. While to the close of this dispensation the prophet-preacher may have a mission, that likewise must terminate with the triumph of our Lord over His foes.

Love, however, survives all, and cannot perish. That shall never fail! St. Paul declares that when he was a child, he "thought as a child and spoke as a child, but now he has put away childish things." What does he mean by "childish things"? He is confusing our sense of values. The modern man is inclined to regard knowledge, oratory, power, as things manly, and to sneer at affection as effeminate. All this is here reversed. That which is now first with the world was second with the apostle. It is as though St. Paul said: "I have outgrown childhood, but I cannot outgrow love! Now we only know in part, but by and by we shall see face to face,—and

there, while we shall have escaped our earthly limitations in every other respect, we shall not have escaped from love.

Nor can we ever dispense with her ministry. There comes an hour in every life when she and what she represents is all and all to the soul. In sickness, bereavement, death, learning has no charm, eloquence no attractions, and when prophecies are spoken they fail to arrest attention. What care we for fine speeches and declamations when the fever is in our blood, or when we are holding in a last embrace a wife or child, and of what value to us the knowledge that crowns men with honor in the academy and gives their names to earthly fame? These things do not appeal to us, or save, or comfort in the hours of affliction. They fail. Love never faileth! It is then we cling to her. It is then that she comforts and sustains. And if she is with us in the tender ministrations of mother, children, friends, if she is revealed to us in the compassions of Christ, we can yield with a smile, even though all the waves and billows of God's providence shall go over us.

Assuming as we have that faith and hope continue as long as the church does, why do we often bewail lost power? Conventions are held to study how Christians can regain their hold on the world. Various remedies are proposed—mainly in the direction of more knowledge, of more faith or hope. Occasionally it is set forth that modern Christianity needs the renewed power of working miracles, of gifts of tongues, or gifts of healing, or gifts of prophesying, or of interpreting prophecy. From these windy meetings the people go home and soon discover that they are as weak as ever. Ministers who are scholars, who live in their studies and are out of touch with their congregations, gifted and noble men, wonder why they see

no larger results, plunge deeper into their books, and try to become more and more orthodox. But of what avail their extra orthodoxy? What is the matter? How explain the comparative impotence? Have we not sufficient knowledge? We never had more. Have we not sufficient faith? We have perhaps as much as the church ever had. Have we not enough of supernaturalism? There never was more credence in miraculous healings and never more professed reliance on supernatural manifestations, from the ghosts of spiritualism to the occult mysteries of psychological therapeutics, than at present.

What the world needs is love! The church that loves most will be most powerful. That is the secret of efficiency. If she is abandoned, if her gospel is to the multitude meaningless, it is because she herself by her artificialities, by her preposterous aristocracies, by her petty affectations of social distinction, has created the impression that she is ashamed of her crowning glory.

Perhaps it may tend to cure her of this fatal folly if we can make plain why it is that this passion invests her with saving potency, and why it is the mightiest and most enduring spiritual force in the universe.

I. There is the majesty of divine power in love. It is in God the means by which He expects to subdue all things unto Himself. That is the secret of His moral omnipotence. He conquers by love. This is the very present meaning of the gospel. What the thunders of Sinai could not do, what the horrors of prolonged captivity failed to accomplish, what the inexorable operations of nature never achieved, this sweet gospel has wrought for millions. A God, throned, crowned, resplendent in glory and appalling in omniscience and omnipotence, has not, and presumably cannot, bring mankind to reverence His authority and accept His sovereignty. But when He steps

down from His lofty greatness and lays aside the sceptre, and puts His arm round men and women and draws them to His bosom and whispers that He is "Father," He is irresistible.

This ideal can never be exhausted. "There is that which giveth and yet increaseth,"—this is the wonderful quality. You give your affection, mother, and you begin to compute what sacrifices you have made; but you rarely compute the increase you have gained in spiritual grace and discernment. This is the real radium, that strange metal whose radiant properties promise to inaugurate a new era in healing, literally shining into disease and shining it away and which, however much it imparts, suffers no diminution of substance. It gives of itself and yet loses not; it surrenders and is not in the least diminished. So, the more we love the more love we have in our souls for others. The supply is never exhausted, but rather increases the more it is taxed and depleted.

No weapon more potent than this. We have been asking what is the missing link between the preacher's words and the heart of the sinner. I speak it with shame—*Love;* its absence tells the story Paul said, "The love of Christ constraineth me." It may be that we feel more than we can express—certainly then our expression is sadly at fault. I am oppressed when I think of this. If we come into the pulpit and try to look superior to every one else, and then rush away, manifesting no interest in any one particularly, no wonder that we fail to reach the people. Critics are saying that preachers fail because they are not intellectual enough, or are not sufficiently advanced in thought. The explanations are all faulty. Let the minister love more and he will move and help others more.

II. There is also the majesty of divine beauty in this grace. "Christ is the chiefest among ten thousand."

God has revealed His benevolence in the beautiful, and the beautiful is the image of His benevolence. Real affection always tries to express itself similarly. In divine worship we bring the tribute of our music, or our flowers, —even one poor flower may mean much—and seek to make everything attractive in the sanctuary. So in our human relations, love tries to make everything beautiful. It adorns the home, adds a touch of color here and there, the presence of some garden trophies. When a wife professes it for a husband, or a mother for her child and is willing to leave everything untidy, gloomy, neglected; or when a father is harsh and glum and never thinks of helping, something is radically wrong. In impoverished homes I have noticed the difference; in one the pathetic endeavor to make all charming, in the other, to leave everything unclean and hideous.

I once read of a school where there was a very plain girl. Somewhat cruelly her companions would remind her of her lack in attractions. The school-teacher saw the depressing effect on her of this treatment. One day she handed her a coarse lump covered with black earth, and said: "This is like yourself; only plant it." The schoolgirl took it home and obeyed, not understanding. Out of it grew a Japanese lily. Then she perceived. And in the progress of time love in her soul imparted a heavenly charm to her character and to her face as well. There is a northern legend which tells how a man believed himself followed by an evil being. He lost his property through a storm and his first-born died. Then he determined that he would find the monster who had injured him. Day and night he watched for him. He lay in wait for him. At last he saw him and rushed upon him. A very terrible struggle ensued, and it seemed as though he must perish. But gathering up his strength he seized the crea-

ture and turned back his head to gash his throat—and then the moon shone out. What do you think he saw in the face of the beast? He saw *his own face.* And the legend teaches that it was himself who was his own enemy, and that he had ruined all by his own selfishness.

III. There is the majesty of divine serenity in love. We always associate a holy calm with God. When it is said that "a thousand years with Him are as one day," we immediately think of Him as moving reposefully. Our Saviour in all the strain of His tempted and tempestuous life invited the world to come to Him for rest. Wherever there is hate there must be agitation, uncertainty, and possible anarchy. Peace comes when we are at peace with the God of peace, and with our fellow-beings. It is this spirit which makes the lives of many saints so fascinating. Take, for instance, Columba. He renounced the warlike frenzy of his youth and became a leader in the creative arts of peace and the preacher of supernatural hopes. He made Iona a centre of light and loveliness. And when He came to die his end was full of holy quietness. He sent this message to his spiritual children: "Let peace and charity, a charity mutual and sincere, reign always among you." St. Cuthbert also was gentle and composed. During his wanderings when his followers were sad, he would say: "Never did man hunger who served God faithfully;" and beholding the eagle above, he would add: "by it even food can come." When a snow-storm in Fife hedged him in, one said to him: "The snow closes the road along the shore to us;" another added: "The storm bars our way over the sea." St. Cuthbert answered: "There is still the way of heaven that lies open."

We surely need no further account of the wondrous potency of love. It, and it alone, allies the individual and

the church with the heart of God Himself, and brings mankind, as can be done in no other way, to feel its fatherly pulsations. Herein lies the secret of saving power, and when Christianity shall be fully alive to this truth the present religious crisis will give place to a genuine revival.

In the meanwhile there is a danger against which I must raise my voice in warning. Instead of cultivating this grace and relying on it more and more, Christian people may come to underestimate its worth, and at last may sin against it. The sin against love, who can compute its guilt? Is there not in it something akin to the sin against the Holy Spirit?

During the persecutions of the sixteenth century that disgraced England, a condemned man escaped and was received by a nonconformist woman into her house. She watched over him until the immediate peril was over. He left her hospitable roof and betrayed her; and as the one who afforded shelter to a heretic was deemed by the church as equally worthy of punishment, she was arrested and went to the stake. The miserable informer was permitted to go unharmed, and she paid the penalty. But as she was allowed to say a few words before her heartless judges, she exclaimed: "Many have died for faith; it is befitting that one die for love." Thus she magnified the crowning glory of Christianity, but the miserable traitor had transgressed against it beyond the hope of forgiveness.

There is a remarkable poem entitled "The Leper Priest," that renders even more vivid than this pathetic episode the enormity and deadliness of this sin. The poem celebrates the abundant and self-denying labors of Father Damien, who consecrated himself for many years in the spirit of the Moravian missionaries to the spiritual consolation and temporal improvement of the leper community of Molokai. He died at Kalawa, April 10, 1889. The

poet represents this man of God as anxious to visit his home. He engages passage on a ship, but the sailors, notwithstanding his heroic devotion to humanity, will not permit him to continue with them, and put him ashore on a lonely island. They thrust him out. God witnesses the crime. A storm suddenly sweeps the sea, and the vessel is driven towards the land. It is buffeted by the waves and dashed on the surf-tormented rocks around the island, and the priest, who had been abandoned to a miserable fate, appears on the scene and rescues the crew. Thus has he again returned good for evil. He hastens from the presence of those he has befriended, and after awhile the seamen, pushing their way inland, find his body—dead.

> "Then all was dark; the green boughs waved o'erhead:
> With trembling limbs and reeling to and fro,
> They left the presence of the mighty dead
> With leprosy upon them white as snow."

They, too, had sinned against love!

Do we as lightly esteem it? Is it nothing to us that a man is swayed by a divine passion for others? Are we disposed to sneer at his sublime self-forgetfulness, be he a Livingston, a St. Francis, or a Moffat? Do we mockingly crucify the Christ again, or count as unimportant the great principle by which He was moved? And when love shelters us, feeds and nourishes us, guards us from foes in youth and age, and brings to us the light of the blessed gospel, how do we reciprocate and repay? Have we proven ourselves to be unworthy of her ministrations and responded with bitterness and scorn, and wounded and betrayed the love that succored?

These are solemn questions to be answered. They cannot be ignored. Christianity and the world alike are concerned with them. If the former shall forget the meaning

of the Christ who died, and if she shall put away from her His example and His spirit; if the latter shall thrust aside the church that has gone down into its filth and pollution to save its children—then shall neither escape the penalty of their sin, but both shall be driven into the new time

"With leprosy upon them white as snow."

XI

RECOVERY OF THE LOST REVELATION

"I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord."—*2 Kings 22 : 8.*

A MEMORABLE discovery truly, and one surpassing in value the discovery of continents or northwest passages; for the moral life of the world is of larger import than the increase of territorial possessions, and the opening of the way from the sea of time to the ocean of eternity is of higher significance than an open waterway thoroughfare from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

When this event described concisely in the text occurred the world powers of the age were profoundly agitated, and the political atmosphere everywhere was surcharged with the sultry premonitions of coming storm. Egypt was restless and was seeking foreign alliances against threatening foes. Nineveh was being crushed by Cyaxares and Nabopolassar and her prolonged infamy hastened to an ignominious close. Gog and Magog were emerging on the field of history in the north, nomad Scythians, from whom later on were to descend Genghis Khan and Tamerlane with incomputable and indescribable sanguinary horrors following in their train. Judah herself was torn by moral dissensions and by public and private corruption, which impaired her national strength and exposed her to the inroads of her enemies. Everywhere, even in sacred places, were exhibited signs of religious and ethical deterioration. The Temple sheltered vessels made for Baal, for

the Asherah, and the phallic emblem itself was not absent. Idolatry prevailed. Not only was incense offered to the signs of the Zodiac, but the base and cruel deities of the eastern world were honored with sacrifices which involved the loss of personal dignity and self-respect.

It was then when righteousness had reached its lowest ebb, it was then when Zephaniah and Jeremiah were uttering their loudest complaints and protests somewhere between the years 639 and 608 B. C.,—Möller placing it as 623 and Whitelaw at 621,—that Hilkiah came to Shaphan and said: "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord."

Josiah was then king of Judah. He began to reign at the early age of eight, and it is recorded of him that "he walked in the way of David his father," and "turned not aside to the right hand or to the left." As he matured he was oppressed by the awful wickedness of the land, and when only twenty years old was convinced that the evil tide must in some way be stemmed. He had been told by the few faithful men about him that society was a "seething cauldron," a "broken cistern," holding no water, and was destined to be overcome by an enemy "whose chariots should be as the whirlwind," and he determined on a prompt and thorough reformation. Straightway he ordered that the Temple, which had been neglected for over two hundred years, or since it had been repaired by Joash, should be renovated and cleansed. Something of his contagious zeal was caught by Shaphan and Hilkiah and many of the people. Subscriptions were freely offered for the repairs and the high priest gladly busied himself in summing up the money and in superintending the work. And it was while thus employed that he found, hidden among the litter and rubbish that had accumulated during the long period of neglect, the Book of the Law, the recovery of

which in that far off time meant so much to the Hebrews then, and to the religious development of the world in all after ages.

The immediate result of the discovery was remarkable, but unhappily, for reasons that will appear later on, was not enduring. Hilkiah delivered the restored book to Shaphan and he read it, and then carried it to the king and read it before his royal Master. Josiah was startled and terrified by the contents of the revelation, particularly by the curses therein recorded, and in his perplexity consulted Shaphan and his son Ahikam and Abdon and Asahiah, and the prophetess Huldah. The answer of the woman was not encouraging. She confirmed the threatenings of the law, and declared that they would be fulfilled, though God would show favor to Josiah on account of his uprightness and piety. Her reply and the exigency of the hour led to a great religious and social upheaval.

The king called the priests and people together and standing on a platform read "all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord." The result of the reading was a solemn agreement to walk in the ways of Jehovah. Steps were taken to relieve the land from the blight of idolatry. Its emblems and symbols were hurriedly expelled from the Temple, the sun-chariots were burned in the fire, the altars to the stars built on the roof of the chamber of Ahaz were destroyed, and the shrines consecrated to the deities of Sidon, Ammon and Moloch were swept away. The tempest of reforming enthusiasm having reached its height, the king ordered the Passover to be celebrated according to the rules laid down in the recovered book, and in such a manner as had not been known in Israel since the times of the Judges.

Here on a small scale we have exhibited a picture of what

the Bible has done and is yet capable of doing on the larger stage of general history. It has quickened and intensified religious activity, has stimulated and prompted national reform, has inspired and kindled literary genius, and has aroused and exalted the energies and ambitions of multitudes. What it has done it is still fitted to do; and if there is a decline in spiritual vigor, if church attendance has fallen off, and if society in any appreciable measure has become materialized and is serving gilded idols, it is due in no small degree to what is taking place in many circles to obscure the real significance of the Scriptures and to impair their authority. There is a sense in which it is true that the Bible is a lost book to-day, and is in danger of being yet further hidden from general view by accumulating rubbish of one kind and another. It is this impression and the belief that the church ought to take serious cognizance of what is going on, and if possible provide a remedy, that impels me to speak in this sermon on the

Recovery of the Lost Revelation

It may prove of interest to the student, and may not be useless in the discussion that follows, if a reliable conclusion can be reached as to the identity of the book discovered by Hilkiah. But before I take up this question, especially as I must examine it within narrow limits, I would quote an assurance of Professor Harnack's which may serve to quiet apprehension regarding the ultimate outcome of present critical controversies. He says:

"There was a time—the general public indeed have not got beyond it—in which the oldest Christian literature, including the New Testament, was looked upon as a tissue of deceptions and forgeries. That time is passed. For science, it was an episode in which it learned much, and after which it has much to forget. . . . The oldest

literature of the church in all main points and in most details, from the point of view of literary criticism, is genuine and trustworthy."

Accepting this statement as entitled to the highest respect, on account of the scholarship of the author, I am emboldened to maintain on the authority of internal evidence that the volume restored in the reign of Josiah was not merely the whole or a part of Deuteronomy, as set forth by Wellhausen in his "Prolegomena," but that section of the Bible known as the Pentateuch.

If the conclusion reached by Harnack is "worthy of all acceptation," we must at once dismiss the idea of forgery. The book, whether only Deuteronomy or more, claims to have been prepared in the time of Moses and in portions to have been penned by the lawgiver. As, according to Harnack, deception must be ruled out, we cannot concur with those higher critics who hold "that it was produced at the time in which it was discovered." To assume this position is to charge Jeremiah, Josiah, and all interested in the reformation with deliberate falsification and corruption, that is, with a tricky procedure which their characters repudiate.

Klostermann and Köhler have hesitated to countenance such an imputation which would shake our confidence in the whole fabric of revelation, and Möller indignantly rejects it. No inducement existed for the perpetration of such a forgery. People do not willingly pretend to have discovered books which only make plainer their infamy, and which in the name of Almighty God condemn them. Neither do officials, such as priests, manufacture documents that expose their faithlessness and hold them up to public scorn. Yet, on the supposition that the alleged discovery was only a pious fraud, we have the phenomenon of a community, in love with idolatry and base to the core, lending

itself to a fabrication which scathingly denounced them and their wickedness. Kautzsch attributes its origin to the priests, and Kuenen, another destructive critic, credits it to the prophets; but their arguments are destructive of each other, and lead to the inference that the book was not prepared by either, and must have been far more ancient than the days of Josiah.

With the rejection of the pseudepigraphic theory the contention also is discredited that the book was evidently prepared with the express object in view which it achieved—the reformation of the people. For an examination of Deuteronomy alone shows that it was written for the purpose of shaping a nation in its earliest period, and not to meet conditions that existed in the seventh century before Christ. Moreover, it should be remembered that Hilkiah was surprised at the discovery, and in describing it employed the definite article—*the* Book of the Law—implying that he had heard of such a law, though he may not have seen it, and that it was the complete law, not merely a part of it. No; all the facts go to show that it existed long before the times of Josiah, and in the growing defection from God and righteousness had ceased to be read and valued, and so had been laid away by some discouraged priest in the Temple, where it had in the course of a hundred or more years been buried out of sight beneath the rubbish naturally accumulating.

Confirming these suppositions, we should bear in mind that this book, called in one place the "Book of the Law," and in another "Book of the Covenant," [1] could not very well have been composed at the period of its alleged restoration as it contains commands which had long before been obeyed, and alludes to tribes as existing which had already

[1] 2 Kings, 22: 8, 11; 23: 2, 21.

been exterminated. In Deuteronomy there are warnings against Canaanitish worship, orders also that these people are to be extirpated and directions explicit and merciless for the blotting out of the Amalekites. But both the worship and the doomed people had been swept from the face of earth centuries gone. It is singular if the author of this book wrote in the times of Josiah that he should repeatedly write of things and persons as existing when they were extinct, and never once mention a king, or Jerusalem, or any other of the characteristic features of his own age, though they were prominent and marked. That the Scriptures thus restored included more than Deuteronomy can easily be made out by what is said in the Chronicles regarding the new observance of the Passover. For Deuteronomy does not contain the directions which Josiah evidently followed. He must have consulted Exodus, Leviticus or Numbers for the specific details which he minutely and with such lavish generosity carried out. It would seem, also, as though he must have gone to them for instructions regarding his relations towards the prevailing idolatries of the land. While it is to be conceded that Deuteronomy alone could have furnished all that he needed in the way of motive and guidance for this special iconoclastic task, still the parallels between what he did and what is written in Exodus 34 : 13; Leviticus 26 : 10; 20 : 25; 19 : 31; Numbers 33 : 52, creates the impression that he had been directly influenced by these records.

I am particular in upholding the view that the book found was the entire Pentateuch, because on any other supposition it is not easy to account for what followed. As we have seen, things were done which are not commanded in Deuteronomy; and an effect was produced which would hardly have been brought about by the reading of the meagre portions which Kautzsch and Kuenen

insist made up the document when it was brought to light by Hilkiah. For these critics and their school will not admit that the whole of Deuteronomy, as we now have it, was then recovered, but only a small portion, and that subsequent additions have made it what it is. That this attenuated revelation, this detached scrap—itself, according to the critics, essentially an imposition—could have so appealed to the imagination and to the moral nature of a people as debased as they were in the reign of Josiah, and should so mightily have moved them, is both inconceivable and incredible. The cause ought to be proportionate to the effect; and the reformation under Josiah seems to demand the Pentateuch as a whole, not the mere fragment of one of its parts.

We may learn, then, for our own guidance and in our own day to refrain from such extremes of criticism as reduce the Bible to a shadow of its real self, depriving it of much of its substance, more of its coherence, and all of its divine authority. The wonder is expressed that apparently the Scriptures are not studied by the laity as formerly, that their solemn warnings are treated so cavalierly by the general public, and that so many young people should be as ignorant as they are of their contents. Wherefore this amazement? What more reasonable than that the book should be neglected, when according to certain scholars it settles nothing and perpetually gives rise to Pilate's question—"*Quid est veritas?*"—and is only inspired in a way that authenticates nothing and guarantees less.

The world will not study it for the sake of its literary excellencies, nor for the charm it may possess as a museum of antique customs and religious observances; and it grows weary and disheartened when it turns to the venerable volume to find that the higher critics have written

doubt large over much that ministered hope and peace to former generations.

Then Carpenter[1] intensifies this indisposition as far as the ordinary reader is concerned, by writing:

"In insisting that the Bible must be interpreted in the light of historical imagination, modern study has not made it an easy book for the casual reader. It sometimes requires us to realize antique forms of belief from which the thought of to-day has moved far away; it carries us among distant people who interpreted life in terms often widely different from ours."

Why undertake to overcome these difficulties? If we could be sure of gaining substantial advantage and certain knowledge of God and eternal life, these and other obstructions would be gladly surmounted. But when we have only trouble and no appreciable profit why tax our energies?

The belief, now fermenting in the public mind is not realized by the destructive critics and their allies, that when the whole character of the Bible has been changed by the modern rationalizing methods, then "we part company with the root doctrines of Christian dogma, the Incarnation and the Resurrection, and the whole edifice must go." Multitudes have with undue haste concluded that this disastrous climax has been already reached, and consequently they have lost all interest in the Bible and the sweet talk about the poetic charm of the volume, its moral elevation and legendary attractions, will never restore them to the attitude of reverence for its teachings which distinguished their sires. It is only when the Scriptures are honored as having God for their author, truth for their substance, and salvation here and hereafter for their end,

[1] "Bible in Nineteenth Century," p. 511.

that their divine authority is recognized and their contents eagerly studied and prized.

It would seem from these reflections that the recovery of Revelation is as important in our time as it was in the days of Josiah.

Yes; and it may not be amiss to recall the fact, if for no other reason, at least by way of encouragement, that there have been other periods when the sacred books were shut up, hidden, practically lost to mankind, and were found and restored again. They had not perished; neither can they; and though their present condition may not correspond to any former vicissitude, we may have confidence to expect that they will rise superior to whatever misconceptions or misrepresentations now conceal their inspired glories.

The old picture of Martin Luther, standing before a copy of the Scriptures carefully chained to a wall in a crypt, is suggestive. The gospel then did not have free course. It was not only bound by iron, but it was sunken from the eyes of the common people in the inexplorable depths, of the dead languages. The Roman Church boasts that through the dark ages she safely preserved the Word of God. So she did. She kept it securely locked up in an unknown tongue, and fastened by chains in her vaulted chambers. It is her boast that she kept, and it is the higher boast of Protestants that they gave; and had Catholicism done so possibly the world would never have been afflicted with the dark ages. It is singular that she has never yet felt the shame that is involved in her withholding from the masses the volume God bestowed on them for their guidance and comfort. Wyclif, Tyndale, Erasmus, Reuchlin, Luther, Melancthon and the Westminster divines found the old book in the Temple, rescued it from an enormous rubbish heap of traditions and

decrees, and restored it to the world through the magnificent translations which they made. Then modern history began.

Another season of eclipse occurred—something over a century ago. When mediocrity was afflicting England, revolution was convulsing France, and the United States of America were entering on national life, the Bible had been pushed aside, was little studied, and was not generally circulated. Copies of the Scriptures were not abundant. Charles Bala tells how a child walked many miles to find one that she might ascertain the minister's text. The people were perishing for lack of knowledge. With the beginning of the Sunday-school, the church entered on another era of Bible recovery. Societies were formed for its multiplication and distribution. Within one hundred years the British and Foreign Bible Society has issued a hundred and seventy-five million copies; and the American society has issued a million a year for seventy-five years. The output last year of both agencies was five millions, and it has been reported that the demand for the Word is still increasing. At no former period in the world's history have so many Bibles been printed, and never were they so easily within the reach of all classes of society.

This restoration, if the term may be used, is gratifying and encouraging, and were it only equalled by the avidity of the people to read and understand, and were it not impaired by the critical and expository tendencies of our times, we might begin to feel that the Book had really been found at last. Unhappily this comfort is not for us. As fast as it has been freed on the one hand it has been bound on the other. Again is it being hidden from view, shut up in one way or another, and the gravity of the situation is such that in view of it Prof. Goldwin Smith has been constrained to write:

"The Reformation was a tremendous earthquake; it shook down the fabric of mediæval religion, and as a consequence of the disturbance in the religious sphere, filled the world with revolutions and wars. But it left the authority of the Bible unshaken, and men might feel that the destructive process had its limit and that adamant was still beneath their feet. But a world that is intellectually and keenly alive to the significance of these questions, reading all that is written about them with almost passionate avidity, finds itself brought to a crisis, the character of which any one may realize by distinctly presenting to himself the idea of existence without a God."

So tremendous are the issues of the hour growing out of the present critical agitations. The Bible is once more becoming rapidly a lost revelation, and its recovery a concern of the highest import. What ought to be done may be gathered from what warrants such a representation as this.

The Bible is partly lost beneath the rubbish of wild interpretations. This dangerous pursuit is not modern and is as old as man's presumption and folly. It has been of frequent occurrence, since the beginning of Christianity, for erratic and ecstatic souls to impart their lawless frenzies to the Scripture, insist that they originated therein, and were there disclosed in language which grammatically expounded had no more reference to their flighty ideas than it has to "lunar politics," or solar sociologies. There have been serious teachers who have solemnly assured the world that Napoleon III is distinctly revealed under certain cryptic signs; that the angel standing with "one foot on the land and the other on the sea" is undoubtedly the United States, and that the church is to be caught up and left suspended, notwithstanding the law of gravitation, for three years in the air. One writer—and he has many

followers—has located the to-be-famed field of Armageddon in the Mississippi Valley, and has demonstrated to his own patriotic satisfaction that the combined forces of Europe are to be defeated there by an indignant and righteous American nation. Others have elaborated abstruse systems of symbolisms and correspondences by which we are to make out what the Scriptures teach, not by what they say, but by what the recondite method of determining holds that they ought to say. Into no other book do so many people thrust their crude, bewildering fancies as into the Bible, and when I realize how common a thing it is for multitudes of excellent people to seek their own ideas there while they profess to be seeking God's, I wonder whether they can have as much confidence in the inspiration of the volume as in their own.

If judged by the garish, lurid and extravagant interpretations or by the childish and petty notions of its revelation circulated among the people, the Bible must appear to the sober and reflective portion of the community as a very shallow, confusing sensational sort of production, hardly entitled to serious thought. There are two objects well fitted to impair respect for the Bible and to indispose the mind towards its message; the one is a map or diagram of the course of empire illustrated by the picture of a man with a golden head and feet of iron and clay, and the other is a polychromatic copy of the book itself. That the book has retained a measurable degree of influence, notwithstanding these cheapening performances is undoubtedly due to its divine origin and character. Were it not of God these monstrous and ridiculous doings must have buried it in oblivion long ago. But as it is, these colored sections, these grotesque images, and these vapid and freakish expositions, hide the real Bible from the people.

They see them, not it. What it actually is they know

not, and in many instances when it is mentioned it is at once associated, not with its noble disclosures of the divine and the eternal, but with what is absurd and unintelligible. All this wood, hay and stubble must be swept away if it is to be restored to its lawful place in the religious development of the future. The question Christendom has to answer is whether it can afford any longer to have the chief source of its authority and teaching caricatured, which is to all intents and purposes as grave a misdemeanor as to chain it once more to the stone pillar in the vaulted crypt; for in both instances the world is robbed of it as the light of life. It is now common in some quarters to condemn without stint the higher criticism, and in some respects it is worthy of harsh rebuke. In my opinion, however, its excesses are not as perilous to the supremacy of the Scriptures as are the lawless and fantastic interpretations whose name is legion, and whose influence is destructive of reverence and confidence.

The Bible is also partly lost under the weight of specious and glittering idolatries. It is to be remembered that according to the narrative we have been studying, false deities had quite usurped the place of the Holy Oracles. These trifling gods of their symbols filled the Temple, and the worshipper did not even look for anything better or higher. All the while this great treasure of truth was near by and was neither seen nor valued. We, too, have our paltry idolatries, and the commerce or the pleasure we have exalted to the chief place makes us quite indifferent to the diviner gift that lies neglected on the table. Sad it is, but true, that the taste may be so cultivated for the lower that we may come to esteem it the higher, while the higher is treated as though it were the lower. Many a devotee at the shrine of Thespus, and many a follower of Plutus, the son of Jason, imagines himself the wisest of

mortals, and looks with commiseration on those who derive their joys from heavenly sources.

In some instances the shadow of the church obscures the sacred volume, and we listen to her and ignore it. She fills the entire scene with her processionings, her pomps and display, her pretended apostolic origin and infallibility, and with the finery of her bishops and cardinals, and her dazzling splendor quite eclipses the softer but truer light of God's revelation. To the Roman Catholic the Bible occupies a secondary place and is of inferior importance to the church. The church is first and supreme, and she assumes the right to interpret the book, not according to the light that is in it, but according to what she regards as the higher light in herself. Hence, in Roman Catholic countries, the Bible, even the Catholic version, is not in general circulation, and no societies exist for its distribution. It is a priestly possession, to be occasionally referred to, but not to be made free to the masses. As in pre-Reformation days it was securely bound and imprisoned in churches and cloisters, so now it is kept out of sight and is lost to communicants in the Catholic church through the Papal interdict, which, with shame be it recorded, practically enters it in the *Index Expurgatorius*.

The idolatry of sacerdotalism is pernicious, but in its baneful consequences it may be seconded by what has been termed "the idolatry of the letter." It is possible to turn the attention from the soul of revelation to the form and to be so intent on the latter as to miss the meaning of the former. Reading the account of what followed Josiah's reformation and his death, we discover that the high moral strain was too great for the people and that a reaction set in. Ewald, with this deplorable retrogression in mind, suggests this explanation:

"Since it,"—the Book of the Law—"was regarded as

a State authority, there early arose a kind of book science, with its pedantic pride and erroneous learned endeavors to interpret and apply the Scriptures. At the same time there arose also a new kind of hypocrisy and idolatry of the letter, through the new protection which the State gave to the religion of the book acknowledged by the law."

The volume was looked up to as a god, was placed on a pedestal and reverenced. Outwardly it was honored, but its inner and deeper spirit was despised. Hence, Jeremiah, who had urged the people to observe all the words of this Covenant, now appeals to them to trust Jehovah and not to trust the recently discovered law. From strict literalism he launches into splendid and impassioned encomiums on the spiritual side of the divine revelation, and in his fervid utterances we seem to hear the anticipation of our Lord's assertion, "the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life."

There was a time, and the time is not wholly past, when a similar misconception obscured the real character of the Scriptures and impaired their hold on intelligent people. Verbal inspiration was once proclaimed far and near, by which it was maintained that every word, every phrase, and punctuation mark, and chapter heading were dictated as they stand, or are supposed to stand, in Hebrew and Greek originals, by the Holy Spirit—*verbatim et literatim*. Though the difficulties in the way of this theory were pointed out, and though it was shown that loyal evangelical teachers, like Martin Luther, refused it their support, though it was demonstrated that it made God responsible for sayings and deeds utterly irreconcilable with His nature, still its friends were so infatuated that they would not yield. The letter was their idol, and rather than sacrifice that, they were ready to subscribe to the most in-

credible representations and representations disproved by science and were willing that the fair fame of the Almighty should suffer loss. Neither did they perceive that their apprehension of the Scriptures reacted on themselves and tended to make them narrow and unexpansive in thought and feeling.

This idolatry is happily ending, but it still is accepted by many of our Lord's followers. To the extent of its adoption is the world deprived of the Bible; for the Bible of verbal inspiration is not the true Bible. It is a mechanical, magical, material article, as different from the genuine original as a portrait by Rembrandt is from an ordinary photograph. Efforts should be put forth that men and women everywhere may see this distinction. At present thousands of them cannot bring themselves to study the Scriptures because they are under the impression that they must except the findings of the extreme literalists. Let pulpit and teacher take pains to show that inspiration does not necessitate strict dictation; nay, that is not inspiration at all.

The stenographer who takes down the poem dictated by the genius of Tennyson is not inspired. He may be as devoid of feeling and emotion as his own fountain pen. It is the poet that is conscious of the divine afflatus, and of this, is born in him the images and expressions which are his own and which bear the marks of his distinctive personality. So, merely to record automatically a heavenly communication is not, whatever else it may be, inspiration. True inspiration is always the impartation of God to the creature in such a way as to work by and speak through the free conscious exercise of the soul's powers and faculties. Some such definition as this ought to be pressed on the attention of the world; for it recognizes the plan and power of the Almighty, does not necessitate the infallibility

of the human intermediary, and serves to place the Bible in such a light as to command the respectful attention of mankind.

It must also be added that the Bible is now partly lost among the confusion of extreme and contradictory criticisms. This is too large a subject for successful treatment here. I can only undertake to illustrate my thought and perhaps some one else may deal with it in a manner more exhaustive and scholarly.

The plea is sometimes put forth by the higher critics that they are rescuing the Bible from the hands of the Philistines, and are restoring it to its true and original form. They think we ought to be grateful. Let me hasten to assure them that we are; that is, we are grateful for whatever they may have done to make good their avowed intention, and we are not indifferent to the valuable contributions they have made to a better understanding of the Word of God. We do not challege their motives, but we must question the soundness of their method; and we do so because we observe that on the whole their labors have resulted in numerous extreme and contradictory criticisms which impair our confidence in the Bible as being in any real sense a divine revelation, and which render obscure or doubtful some of its fundamental teachings. Instead of their bringing the Scriptures nearer to the common life of mankind as they claim, they have removed them farther, so far that the ordinary intelligent man, willing to be guided by higher criticism, admits that by its canons he can make nothing out of them. They are to him a lost book.

Professor Cheyne, in the "Nineteenth Century"[1] calls Abraham a "lunar hero," and this is quite confusing in

[1] January, 1902.

view of the fact that Christ refers to him as a historical personage, and that the history of Israel is inexplicable apart from his being a veritable character. Moreover, as far as I can judge, the evidence for this singular opinion is purely negative. Nothing has as yet been found outside of the sacred narrative to verify his existence, and hence he did not exist.

"There is no sufficient warrant for supposing individuals, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to have been the ancestors of the people. Isaac and Abraham are as yet unaccounted for—that is, we know of no tribes or clans that bore these names. Probably both were creations of the legend-building imagination, working under the necessities of the patriarchal theory. Abraham as a type of the believer in God reveals the religious faith of the author who drew his picture."[1]

The assertion of the English Wellhausen, though only the echo of what Winckler has said before him, is about as worthy of credence as his wild talk about Jerahmeel, and it has been shown that were we to deal with the text of the Old Testament as Professor Cheyne does, we could invent any theory we please, and it would be as plausible as his Jerahmeel and as little entitled to confidence.

Let any one carefully read in the last volume of the "Encyclopedia Biblica" the articles dealing with Old and New Testament literature, and he will be impressed with the contradictory character of much that is advanced by eminent scholars. Having perused these articles, I am persuaded, if they are reliable—and that they are *not* may be inferred as they fail to agree in their statements,—that not only must we reject the authorship of Moses, Isaiah, and the rest, but we must as well reject the authorship of the

[1] "See Old Testament History," p. 50, Prof. H. P. Smith, D. D.

Almighty; for as He is the God of order and not of confusion, He could have had nothing to do with the production of such fragmentary and incoherent literature.

What of reliable information can be derived from the treatment to which our Lord's temptation is subjected in the "Biblica"? Dr. Moffat gives one explanation and Dr. Cheyne another. The first writer regards the temptation as a parabolic account of an actual occurrence in the early life of Christ; the second represents it as an endeavor on the part of Jesus by fasting to overcome the powers of darkness, parallel with attempts made in the East by similar means to conquer the jinns. Anything, ready to believe anything, however fantastic and shadowy, rather than accept the narrative as historic in its essential features.

Then we are told by another author, Prof. N. Schmidt, that Jesus was never addressed by the demoniacs as the Son of God, did not claim to be the Messiah, was not conscious of a special religious mission, and was only an exalted teacher of humanism. In the same volume we are informed by Professor Schmidt that Paul did not write the second epistle to the Thessalonians, while Professor M'Giffert maintains that he did. These outspoken contradictions are multiplied in other works devoted to the teachings of the critics.

In several, our Lord is exalted as divine, and yet, having come to guide us into all truth, He is said to have fallen into the errors of His times regarding the authorship of the law, the psalms and the prophets. His miraculous birth is discarded by some and His resurrection by others. We are left in the dark as to what all these mighty representations mean, and how it came to pass that a religion with so much that is indefinite, illusive and mythical could ever have come to be regarded as veracious and trustworthy. In our confusion we are not surprised that

Prof. Friedrich Delitzsch has escaped from the labyrinth by attaining to the conviction "that there is no greater mistake of the human mind than the belief that the Bible is a personal revelation of God," and that "to be quite frank, beyond the revelation of God that we, each one of us, carry in our own conscience, we have certainly not deserved a further personal revelation." This is undoubtedly the end of the whole matter, unless higher criticism pauses and takes counsel of fact and reason. Its present unrestrained license is leading to the suppression and annihilation of the Bible, not to its preservation and recovery. Professor Delitzsch is not deceived by the trend of things. He is perfectly honest. The Bible as a *Bible* is being buried out of sight. Bolingbroke, Chubb, Payne and Ingersoll dug the grave, the critics are inflicting the *coup de grace* and the funeral will follow in a little while.

I may be asked whether I would hinder investigation? Not at all. I would, however, have it conditioned by rules that would keep men from announcing their guesses and speculations as ascertained facts in the name of scholarship, when on the morrow most likely their surmises will give place to others equally unsubstantial. Moreover, I would have the church take the whole matter more seriously. She is drifting along smiling optimistically, while teachers, claiming to be orthodox, are sapping the foundations of her faith. If she desires that it should be so, well. But if she does not, then she should take greater interest in the settlement of the issues that have been raised by higher criticism. Her very existence is at stake. She may, of course, survive as an ethical and eleemosynary society, but not as a church with a revelation of heavenly mysteries. Her fate is inextricably interwoven with the future of higher criticism, and is it too much to expect of her that she demand that it be sane, cautious, coherent

and grounded, not in negations, but in the positive testimony of history and experience?

In the story of which my text is part, it is set forth at length that the recovery of the "Book of the Law" was followed by a reformation. Nor can the Book in our times be restored without quickening the moral and spiritual life of the land. Here then is motive for the modern Hilkiah to sanctify the Temple of the living God; for if he can rouse God's people to greater consecration and holiness, their eyes will soon be open to the real value of the Word and it will not long be kept from the idolatry-cursed world.

Ruskin, writing of the Alps, has given utterance to these words: "The wall of granite in the heavens was the same" to those who had seen it in former ages and to those of his own age. He adds, "They have ceased to look upon it: you will soon cease to look also, and the granite wall will be for others. Then, mingled with these more solemn imaginations, come to the understanding of the gifts and glories of the Alps—the fancying forth of all the fountains that well from its rocky walls, the strong rivers that are born out of its ice, and of all the pleasant valleys that wind between its cliffs, and all the chalets that gleam among its clouds and happy farmsteads couched upon its pastures."

What the Alps are to man in the field of sense and of beauty the Scriptures are in the domain of faith and righteousness. They, too, have their sunny summits, their heights of purity, their tender resting-places for the weary soul, their retreats in the shadowy mysteries, their bubbling refreshing springs of heavenly joy, and their streams of spiritual power rising among their glorious solitudes, and flowing forth into the arid wilderness places of the earth. As they resemble the Alps in these things, so do they in another. They also depend upon their granite foundations

and their granite strength penetrating and sustaining their multiplied beauties. Destroy the basis of rock and the structure of rock and the Swiss scenery would crumble and vanish. Let the foundations of the Bible be upturned and all that renders that book a joy and help to humanity will be swallowed up and disappear.

What the world needs for its noblest, purest, grandest life is inspiration; and as the Bible itself is the product of God-inspired humanity, so it in turn becomes the inspiration of humanity. There is not a ship that sails on a voyage of charity whose sails are not filled with its heavenly breezes; there is not an army that goes forth to antagonize evil that is not thrilled by its encouragements; and there is not an enterprise for the alleviation of suffering and for the uplifting of the fallen that is not stimulated by its humanizing spirit. When it is ignored or undervalued we lose this impelling and exalting impulse. Many of the falures in the line of duty and much of the mean selfishness of the age are doubtless due to the fact that tame, colorless and debasing motives have been given unusual prominence of late. The result of this dead-levelism and soullessness has been indicated by M. Taine, and his statements reveal a grave tendency which should be checked.

"We are now acquainted, not with morality but only with moral conditions, not with principles but only with facts. We explain, however, and, as has been already said, the mind at last accustoms itself to tolerate everything which it can explain. Modern virtue consists entirely in toleration. Enormous innovation! whatever is, has, as far as we are concerned, a right to be."

And this is the end of all the heroic struggles on behalf of right, justice, truth, and of all the thinking, suffering, dying for God and for righteousness. Naville at once dis-

closes the cause and the consummation of this reversal of what the noblest spirits of the ages regarded as the true goal to be reached. He says: "Mankind is the summit of the universe, there is nothing higher. Mankind is God, if we allow that this sacred name may be used in a new sense. How then can mankind be judged? In virtue of what law, when there is no law? In the name of what right, when there is none? Condemnation is but personal prejudice, the view of a narrow mind. God is not to be judged. He is to be described. His acts are to be recognized; they are all to be equally honored." To this he adds: "The glorification of success is the first and most certain consequence of indifferentism, and the first thing to do is to render homage to victory—whatever its character if it is really victory."

This stage in social development we are rapidly reaching. Victory is everything. We praise, commend, extol it, and are not over-nice in our judgment of the means employed. Whether the success achieved involves the disregard of international obligations, or the prostitution of commercial honor, is comparatively speaking of minor importance. The real thing is growing more and more to be the success, though it involves tricky diplomacy, disreputable trading and social hypocrisy. And the explanation? Man, while too astute to call himself God, has been busy making himself the centre of all things. Hence, virtue and toleration have become interchangeable terms. There is no law to judge him and whatever is is right. Responsibility in its higher sense is a fiction. He is not answerable to any one, unless it may be to the courts, and these can be evaded, and when evaded add to the *prestige* of the success.

Such, then, is the natural outcome of much that is going on about us, foretold not by preachers but by men un-

prejudiced by professional bias. The inspiration to the truer, sweeter, broader life has been weakened, and to multitudes it has ceased to be a reality. Can it be revived? That is a momentous question for our theological schools, our churches, and our preachers to answer. It must be answered and that right speedily, or the present drift will continue and increase in velocity.

The inspiration can be revived, and will be, if the lost Bible is recovered, and will not be if the book is left to be buried deeper and deeper beneath the weight of conflicting theories and foolish idolatries. This then is of immense importance and cannot safely be delayed. Up, explorers, with pick and spade, pursue your investigations in ancient lands that bricks and monuments may confirm, as thus far they have done, God's Holy Word. Up, scholars, search, explore, and translate all documents that verify the sources of our faith. Up, saintly men and women, and bring your experience to the judgment seat, that the marvel-working power of the Sacred Book may be proclaimed. Up, all who love humanity, and would have it feel the influence that proceeds from the truth of God, and demand that it shall be freed from every bond that binds. Then the recovered Bible shall, like the Spirit dispelling at the beginning the chaotic void and darkness, breathe on the world anew the inspiration which leads to light, order and the triumph of the good! AMEN!

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